Sunday February 20, 2011 | 12 sections / Vol. 26 / No. 74 / P30 | www.inquirer.net | Mobile Alerts: To SEND IN REGISTRATION

PHILIPPINE Sunday INQUIRER

ELSEWHERE, SECOND: The heart is on still's almost time to head for the beaches and other places where the water's fine. This stuffie Calamba, Laguna, gets a head start in business and has on it displays lifesavers and other floating tools to paint in the colors of the rainbow.

'A gesture of friendship'

China's act 'special arrangement, historical'

By DJ Yap

CONSIDER it a gesture of friendship.

The Chinese government yesterday said its unprecedented decision to postpone the execution of three Filipinos found guilty of drug smuggling resulted from a serious consideration of a "friend's request."

The deferment of the execution, originally scheduled for Monday, said Tuesday was a "special arrangement given by the Chinese side" following the visit to Beijing of the Philippine delegation led by President Aquino and headed by Vice President Jejomar Binay to make a last-ditch appeal for a reprieve, according to the Chinese embassy in Manila.

"The Chinese side has taken serious consideration of the Philippines' request," said Ethan Sun, deputy chief of po-

A SHORT SEE, A-3

P-Noy: Cases to be filed vs prosecutors

By Norman Bordadora

PRESIDENT AQUINO wants the book thrown at those who sprung prominent accomplice for the gross bungles that allowed former military comptroller Carlos Garcia to walk free on bail of P60,000 despite an original charge of plunder.

In a speech delivered yesterday at the alumni homecoming of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA) in Baguio City, the President said he was backing the investigation of past instances of high-level corruption in the military, including a purported theft fund that Garcia had kept to use.

It was Mr. Aquino's first time as President to address the PMA alumni, who include the highest ranking officers in the military and police.

The administration believes that the armed forces is the aggrieved party in Garcia's P303-million plunder case because it involves military resources.

Speaking in English and Filipino, the President said many PMA alumni were among the victims of military corruption.

"I know that many of those

A SHORT SEE, A-3

P-NOY'S FIRST President Aquino attends the Philippine Military Academy 112th alumni homecoming, his first as President and Commander in Chief. Angelo Reyes' and the (PMA Class '64) and military coup tuption were main subjects of conversation among the soldiers as PMA graduates call on leaders

MORE PHOTOS, A-3

Absent Trillanes is hot topic at PMA rites

By Doris Z. Pasilingan and Vincent Cabreza

FORT BONIFACIO, Baguio City—If comments by hush-Trillanes day at the Philippine Military Academy's alumni homecoming, at

A SHORT SEE, A-3

SAINTLY ENCOUNTERS

Flying high for 3 days with John Paul II

By Riley M. Carballo
Contributor

IF FILIPINOS consider the beatification of Pope John Paul II in Rome on May 1 special, it's because he visited the Philippines twice, in 1981 and 1995, endearing him to these people forever.

The Pope apparently felt the same affinity says Concepcion Bacani, who joined a contingent of Faith pilgrimage after the 1995 visit. She recalls that the pilgrims had hoped for an audience with the Pope in Rome, but never told that he was in his customary residence of Castel Gandolfo in Latin a few miles away.

Four organizers Arlene Ongkiko embroidered a side trip to Latin. Upon arrival outside the residence, the pilgrims received shocking: "Pope John Paul! Pope John Paul! We are Filipinos here for your blessing! Filipinos!"

Within minutes, says Bacani, the Pope appeared at his bal-

A SHORT SEE, A-3

PDI breaks another first: Digital edition

By JP Rufino
Head, Inquirer Mobile

THE PHILIPPINE Daily Inquirer launches the market digital edition today, another first for a Philippine newspaper.

Available at http://pdi.by.inquirer.digital, the new Digital Edition is an electronic-specific version of the Philippine Daily Inquirer, the system that hosts the paper's digital replica.

With the new edition, Inquirer readers no longer have to search for the features among the over 1,700 newspapers available on PressDisplay and its mobile applications, PressReader.

Instead, readers not only get all the photos, ads, articles, comics and sections of the daily paper (not all or bits of the papers are carried online in Inquirer.net), the paper's free website, but also Inquirer Magazine, Inquirer Inquirer and Inquirer Golf Monthly, titles previously unavailable on the Digital Edition.

A SHORT SEE, A-3

How broadcaster gets a high, finds life's meaning

By Karen Davila

Editor's Note: The author is ABS-CBN news anchor and newsreporter and the Country Goodwill Ambassador for World Vision.

I MAY be a broadcast journalist by profession, but I consider myself to be an advocate and volunteer at heart.

I first discovered the joys of volunteerism and advocacy in 1999 when I was a young reporter at GMA 7, covering the Jimmy Carter Work Project of Habitat for Humanity in Cebu with 200 homes for the poor in Cebu.

Oprah often speaks of "Aha!" moments, and clearly that was one of mine. I don't know if it was my idealism, or naiveté, but it dawned on me that there was a Christ-like halo around former US President Jimmy Carter as his quietly built homes with his wife, Rosalyn. There was no fanfare, no interviews. No red carpet treatment. I was amazed at how one who was the most powerful man in the world at one point could find such pleasure in quiet carpentry work.

When I hosted the event in the evening, Carter shook my hand and said, "I can see you are doing the Lord's work in your eyes."

And that's when Habitat for

A SHORT SEE, A-3

ENTERTAINMENT
- **Ex-sweet** starlet returns after secret, 9-mo break

SUNDAY LIFESTYLE
- **No,** I didn't Photoshop Sharon
- **Tessa's** Closet goes to MOA

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SUNDAY INQUIRER MAGAZINE
- **5** steps to take when you lose your car to thieves
- 8 ways to keep vehicles safe

WORLD
- **Libya's** Gadhafi, Bahrain king battle to stay in power

NEWS
- **SC** junks comfort women plea to reverse ruling clearing justice of plagiarism

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

6/42 — NEXT DRAW: 7 5 9 7 2 7

11/45 — SUPER LOTTO 6/49: 3 13 20 31 36 39

5/42 — JACKPOT: P40,720,690.80

6/42 — GRAND LOTTO: 4 18 29 33 41 49

5/42 — P30,000,000.00

'Failure of peace talks good for AFP'

By Leila B. Salaverria

MILITANT GROUPS yesterday accused the Armed Forces of the Philippines of attempting to derail the peace process by arresting a "consultant of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines" on the eve of the peace talks.

At the same time, the groups Bagong Alyansang Makabayan (Bayan) and Desaparecidos (Justice for Families of the Disappeared) urged the authorities to release another NDFP consultant, Leo Velasco, who went missing four years ago, as well as all other political prisoners.

Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. said the AFP was seeking for the failure of the negotiations in order to push its "militarist policy."

"With a total war policy, soldiers have a distraction from the countrywide issues such as the great corruption of top generals in the AFP," Reyes said in a statement.

According to Reyes, the arrest of Hall Jacinto Manibo on the eve of the resumption of the peace talks on Feb. 14 was intended to preempt the NDFP, the political arm of the Communist Party of the Philippines (CPP), to pull out of the peace process.

Peace negotiations were set Feb. 15 to 21 in Oslo, Norway.

"The recent arrest of known NDFP consultants by state security forces is intended to sabotage the peace process. The AFP wants to force the NDFP to either pull out of the negotiations or to capitulate completely to the [government]. The repeated and blatant violations of prior agreements continue to undermine the peace efforts," Reyes said.

The military claimed Manibo was not a member of the consultants of the CPP and had several pending arrest warrants on murder and robbery charges.

He said the President should release all NDFP consultants who are covered by the Joint Agreement on Safety and Immunity Guarantees so they could join the peace talks.

Meanwhile, Lorena Santos of the group Desaparecidos lamented that her long search for Velasco had not borne fruit.

Justice had even gone to the Court of Appeals to get the authorities to produce her father, but her petition was dismissed on the ground that it was not shown it was the police or the military that abducted him on Feb. 19, 2007.

Santos issued a statement in the form of a letter addressed to her father, in which she expressed her fear that he had been summarily killed and noted that many other people may have met the same fate.

"Forgive me for not being able to find you yet. Even with the change of administration, disappearances still continue, desaparecidos like you are still missing, and perpetrators are still walking free. You were right when you said that it is not a change of administration that will bring significant change in society but the other way around," she said.

She also voiced fear that she may never see her father again, saying that she had dreamed of him and that he had told her that he was no longer alive.

The CPP-New People's Army accused Undersecretary Velasco—one of their comrades and accused the military of torturing and executing its captives, contrary to international rules of war.

Bayan reiterated its suggestion that President Aquino follow his mother's example 25 years ago and release all political prisoners.

13 AWFILS FOR SMART

EXECUTIVES of Smart Communications Inc. show off the 13 trophies it won during the 56th Ano Dela Comunicaciones Friday. Smart garnered four excellence awards (three for its corporate social responsibility program Kabuklat in the areas of education, environment and health, and the fourth for its branding and communication campaign) and eight merit awards (for its various programs, including "Two Signatures," "Vivos Pa Ba Kuno," the Smart Teknoh Program newsletter, and "Love ko si Mate Supersonic Corporate). The awards are given annually by the Public Relations Society of the Philippines to outstanding PR programs and individuals promote public interest, good values and genuine service to the community and society.

Taiwan: PH apologized for row

TAIPEI—Taiwan's foreign ministry said Saturday the Philippine has apologized after a stern envoy to deportation of 14 Taiwanese to China and launched an investigation into the incident.

"I apologize for this unfortunate incident," Amadeo R. Perez, chair of the Manila Economic and Cultural Office (MECO), once quoted as saying in a ministry statement after he met with Foreign Ministry Timothy Yang in Taipei on Friday.

President Benigno Aquino has ordered a probe of the incident and has tasked Foreign Sec. Mar Roxas as a special envoy to Taiwan to patch things up, the statement said.

Like most countries, the Philippines formally recognizes only the Beijing government, while Meco handles economic and cultural ties with Taiwan.

The Taiwanese were arrested in Manila and deported along with 26 Chinese nationals earlier this month after they allegedly swindled mainland Chinese out of $26 million in an international scam.

Taiwan expressed fury insisting that its residents should have been sent back to the island to face justice and warned Manila that the incident had dealt a serious blow to bilateral ties. AFP

Military to probe torture video posted on Facebook

THE MILITARY said Saturday it was investigating a purported torture video posted on Facebook that showed uniformed soldiers abusing defenseless prisoners.

Investigators were checking the identities of the uniformed men shown repeatedly punching and kicking at least three people in civilian clothes, said Armed Forces of the Philippines spokesperson Maj. Gen. Jose Mabanta.

"We are the first to be concerned about this. We have said that we will not do those [abuses], then we saw it right in our faces," Mabanta told Agence France-Presse.

Officials also want to know when and where it happened—if it actually happened, Mabanta said.

The poor-quality footage shows the men lying on the ground in a remote plantation. Their hands are tied behind their backs and hoods cover their heads as men in military uniforms shout at and swear at them.

Col. Domingo Tutaan, head of the AFP's human rights office, said the military would also try to find out what happened to the supposed victims.

"The intent of the investigation is to determine the culpability of the soldiers and, if there is culpability, we will file immediately a case in accordance with the military justice system," Tutaan said.

The video is on the Facebook page of "Benjita Peter John" and includes statements against the Philippine and United States governments.

The site owner acknowledged Agence France-Presse's request to provide more information on the footage but then did not immediately provide them.

Although 58 troops are helping train local forces to battle Islamic extremists, there are no American troops over on the video.

The supposed abusers were apparently wearing uniforms that were issued to the Philippine Marines three or four years ago, said Navy spokesperson Capt. Giovanni Carlo Bacordo.

"If before it happened five years ago or something, the armed forces does not order are human rights violations," Bacordo told AFP. AFP

Prelate opposes Libingan resting place for Marcos

By Jerome Aning

FORMER PRESIDENT Ferdinand Marcos should not be buried at the Libingan ng mga Bayani, the national burial ground, a senior official of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines (CBCP) said yesterday.

Calbayog Bishop Leopoldo Bliger, chair of the CBCP permanent committee on public affairs, said Marcos, who declared martial law in 1972 and imposed one-man rule for 14 more years, was "not qualified" to be interred in the cemetery because only those who led heroic lives deserved to be buried there.

"For me, if that is really a national heroes' cemetery and if it's really intended for those who led heroic lives, I don't think he'll qualify to be buried there," Bishop told reporters in an interview.

The prelate said that the more than 10 years reign of Marcos, more than half of which was under martial law, was marked by massive corruption and human rights violations.

Bliger said it would be up to Malacañang and the military and families to decide whether or not Marcos deserved to be buried at the Libingan.

"I think there are regulations and traditions that need to be considered regarding that," he explained.

"It's hard to judge if a person is heroic or not unless we really know what he did for the country," he added.

Marcos died in 1989 in Hawaii, where he spent four years in exile after being toppled by the People Power Revolution. His body was brought home to his native Ilocos, Ilocos Norte, in 1991 and kept in a refrigerated crypt.

Through the years, the Marcos family has been pleading for the burial of the late dictator's remains in the Libingan ng mga Bayani. The late Marcos consistently opposed the victims of human rights violations, politicians and other sectors.

Marcos' son and namesake, Sen. Ferdinand "Bongbong" Marcos Jr., recently renewed the call to have his father interred at the state cemetery, saying the elder Marcos deserved to be buried there as a former president.

The young Marcos recently rested the family's plea after the government allowed the burial at the Libingan of former Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes, who committed suicide amid a probe of his and other officers' involvement in a corruption scandal in the military.

The Libingan ng mga Bayani is the final resting place of Marcos's predecessors Diosdado Macapagal Sr. and Carlos P. Garcia, two vice presidents, various national heroes and martyrs, prominent government officials, and hundreds of military servicemen.

Lexus CT200h Launches in Japan

LAST JANUARY, Lexus launched the world's first luxury full hybrid compact car, the 2011 CT200h, in its home country Japan. Having welcomed the brand only last 2005, it is one of the first countries in the world to offer premium hybrid vehicles.

The front-wheel drive CT200h is powered by an innovative 1.8L Atkinson cycle combustion engine, designed specifically for hybrid vehicles. This engine is coupled with the Lexus Hybrid Drive, allowing the CT200h to top its class in fuel efficiency. It boasts of a rating of 34Km/L in the 10-15 test cycle, outlined by the Japanese Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT). While MLIT testing is very generous, the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimate puts the hybrid at around 18Km/L in combined city and highway driving.

The main feature of the Lexus CT200h is the Dual Mode driving select dial that enables the hybrid to shift between economical, performance and electric modes.

"The difference is huge," explains Carlo Chungunco, Lexus Marketing Officer. "You really feel the change in the way the car performs. In sport mode, power delivery is better and steering is given more weight and feel. 'Eco' mode, on the other hand, delivers a serene drive that really places the focus on fuel economy."

With an extremely rigid state-of-the-art chassis design and a newly developed suspension system, the CT200h provides an exhilarating drive that does not overlook environmental awareness.

In addition to the standard CT200h, Lexus also introduced an F-Sport variant, equipped with performance dampers that increase the rigidity of the suspension system without compromising Lexus' signature ride comfort.

Lexus expects to sell 1500 units of the new luxury hybrid vehicles in Japan, per month.

Originally designed for European markets, the CT200h will be made available in North America and China, later in the year. The local subsidiary, Lexus Manila, meanwhile, is expecting delivery of the dedicated hybrid within February.

Interested enthusiasts can contact Lexus Manila at 856-5050 for a private viewing of the CT200h luxury hybrid, prior to its official Philippine launch on the 21st of February.

I got my father's antique crib.
His red bike.
His Celtics cap.
His varsity jacket.
His aviators.
His college ring.
His engraved fountain pen.
His vinyl collection.
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His old office.
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SC junks plea on plagiarism

By Nikko Dizon

THE SUPREME Court has denied "for lack of merit" a motion by a group of Filipino students and academics asking it to reverse the high court's decision condemning Associate Justice Mariano del Castillo of plagiarism.

"Movants claim that the court has to its decision 'legalized or approved' of the commission of plagiarism in the Philippines. This claim is absurd. The Court like everyone else condemns plagiarism as the scandal in academic undertakings and more the acts," said the SC, 8 per curiam decision.

This means a brief, usually unanimous decision rendered without elaborate discussion, as to whether justice is upheld as the author.

Del Castillo was alleged to have plagiarized portions of the ruling of Senior Justice Antonio Carpio in the decision denying the petition of the Malaya Lolas Organization, led by Isabelita Vinuya, seeking to compel the government to demand an apology from the Japanese government for the sex crimes of its soldiers and compensation for the Filipino women victims.

When the court released its decision in October 2010, Vinuya et al. filed a motion for reconsideration, saying the magistrate also appeared to have plagiarized other authors' works when he wrote the decision as ring Cuellar of the Commission on Elections.

In the SC's decision, the high court said the petitioners were "misjudging" when they made the claim against Del Castillo.

It said Del Castillo had explained that he made the proper attributions to his sources in the ring Cuellar decision "although they at times suffered in formatting lapses."

The court also set aside a motion by the lawyers of the of the Philippines to intervene in the case, as well as former University of the Philippines professor Peter Weiner's claim of several other alleged instances of plagiarism in the assailed women decision.

Praised for 'honest work'

The high court praised Del Castillo for doing "an honest work" when he wrote the Vinuya decision.

"Senior Del Castillo examined and reexamined the facts and went by the opposing sides in a way that no one has ever done. He identified and formulated the core of the issues that the parties raised. And when he had done this, he discussed the state of the law relevant to their resolution. It was here that he drew materials from various sources, including the three foreign authors cited in the charges against him. He compared the divergent views these present as they developed in history. He then explained why the court must reject some views in light of the peculiar facts of the case and applied those that suit such facts. Finally, he drew from his discussion of the facts and the law the right solution to the dispute in the case. He had done an honest work," the court said.

The court said the inadvertent omission of source attribution had been sufficiently explained by Del Castillo's "highly qualified and experienced court-employed researcher."

In hindsight, the high court said it should not have entertained the accusations against Del Castillo that were made by the losing party in the case.

It said the petitioners were even joined by faculty members of the UP College of Law where Del Castillo was "evidently maligned ... with charges of plagiarism."

The court has yet to issue a ruling on whether or not 37 UP law professors who signed the petition should be cited in contempt for making such allegations against Del Castillo.

More accusations

The Feb. 8 decision triggered an exchange between Associate Justices Roberto Abad and Jose Lourdes Perez in their separate opinions.

Abad accused Perez of throwing after allegations of plagiarism against Del Castillo.

Perez denied being a plagiarist and lobbied in himself in her 48-page dissenting opinion.

While the decision had already come the division and the separate concurring and dissenting opinions last Friday, they were all missing from the Supreme Court website on the same day.

A source had feared the division and the opinions as PDF files and e-mailed them to the Inquirer.

The high court's spokesperson, Jose Midas Marquez, said in a text message that there appeared to have been "missing portions" from the documents that had been uploaded.

Marquez said he was still having the "omitted" as press time.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

FEBRUARY 20 (Sunday)
Psalter Week 3
Ordinary Time
Ps 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13
The Lord is kind and merciful.

1st Reading: Lev 19:1-2, 17-18

Yahweh spoke to Moses and said, "Speak to the entire assembly of the people of Israel and say to them: Be holy for I, Yahweh, your God, am holy.

Do not hate your brother in your heart; rebuke your neighbor frankly so as not to share in his guilt. Do not seek revenge or nurture a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh.

2nd Reading: 1 Cor 3:16-23

Brothers and sisters: You are not aware that you are God's temple, and that God's Spirit dwells within you? If anyone destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him. God's temple is holy, and you are this temple.

Do not deceive yourselves. If anyone of you considers himself wise in the ways of this world, let him become a fool, so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's eyes. To this, Scripture says, 'God catches the wise in their own cleverness.' It also says, 'The Lord knows the reasoning of the wise, that it is useless.'

Because of this, let no one become an admirer of humans, for everything belongs to you, Paul, Apollos, Cephas... life, death, the present and the future. Everything is yours,

Gospel: Mk 2:18-22

Jesus said to his disciples, "You have heard that it was said: An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in Heaven. For he makes his sun rise on both the wicked and the good, and he gives rain to both the just and the unjust.

"If you love those who love you, what is special about that? Do not even tax collectors do as much? And if you are friendly only to your friends, what is so exceptional about that? Do not even the pagans do as much? Be you just as your God in heaven is perfect."

Reflection:

Lenten

- You shall be righteous and perfect in the way you humanly define is righteous and perfect.

Mindanaon

- Perfection is possible! In fact, we are called to be perfect. By following God's way and not ours, we become holy and righteous like Him—the perfection!

Ormoc

- Let us strive for perfection in our lives. Mother Ig is not an option for God's children and chosen ones.

Aklan

- It's love over method in each employee up to our work and busy. Let us live up to our dignity as God's sons and daughters.

Daily Gospel Commentaries Foundation, Inc., 8 Mariano R. Del Villar Rd. corner Quezon Ave., 4109 Bacoor, Cavite, Philippines. Tel. (046) 417-0000 loc. 107 to 109 (046) 417-0000 loc. 107 to 109 (046) 417-0000 loc. 107 to 109

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CHEVROLET

P-Noy: Cases to be filed vs special prosecutors

From page A1

who are here are among the victims and are really trying to find out what the truth is so that you can claim whatever did there is among your ranks. And I believe we are on one side in this fight," Mr. Aquino said.

"We will surely have charges can be filed against not only those named in the cases but also their cohorts, including the prosecutors involved in the Garcia plea bargain," he said.

Forgetfulness

Referring to the prosecutors from the Office of the Ombudsman who had testified at the congressional inquiries into Garcia's controversial plea bargain, the President said they appeared to have been afflicted with the forgetfulness associated with old age.

"They said that they don't have voluminous, that they didn't know what they were looking into. Pity our country," he said.

Mr. Aquino also alluded to someone with questionable assets "who allegedly committed actions transgressive against the people," and who, when asked pointedly last morning questions at the hearings, declared that he could not remember certain events—an apparent reference to number Iacture AFP comptroller, Jacinto Ligot.

"Siyempre nyan, I don't think he's that old to be so forgetful," the President said.

"But as said by one who's since then me, with every problem comes a solution. We are given an opportunity to look at the system presently in operation, to look at why this situation happens so that we can have the opportunity ... to correct certain ways or wrong systems that give rise to this kind of oppression of our fellow men," he said.

Promises

Mr. Aquino said it was only fitting that those proven to have violated the law should be punished.

"Our point is rather clear. It is our duty to file cases against those who committed transgressions. If there's sufficient evidence to prove them. Part of our mandate is to uphold the interest of the people," he said. "Sino, if we fail to meet this obligation, we'd have short-changed the people."

The President also indicated that in his administration's applied fanfare in addressing the problem of corruption, there were now enough funds to uphold the soldiers' welfare.

"After eight months of my service, this year, I promise that we will start to address the lack of housing among the members of the Armed Forces and of the police," he said.

Mr. Aquino said at least 20,000 housing units would be distributed this year to the members of the military and police.

"Because we addressed corruption, because we were prudent in our spending of public funds, this is a promise that won't go unfulfilled. Even with the hard shovels there, it can still be increased because we already have savings," he said.

No-shows

Neither Garcia (PMA Class 1971) nor Ligot (PMA Class 1976) was present at the homecoming.

Brawl judges Rep. Rodolfo Biazon, president of the PMA Alumni Association (PMAAA) and a member of Class 1964, said the military structure "is under siege" because "a few of the anomalies have fallen prey to human frailties."

Biazon, a former AFP chief, said heroes in their stellar class deed "orchestrated and executed by a few" do not deserve to be "blown asunder" and to "take the lead in the thrusting process as we can continue to march in service of the people with our heads held high, (believing) we deserve the [public] trust."

He also said the PMAAA had issued a manifesto supporting the congressional inquiry into the military fund seizure to ensure that the culprits would be exposed and prosecuted "within the bounds of law."

Ombudsman's move

Later in the day in Malacañang, the President's deputy spokesperson said it was up to the Office of the Ombudsman to decide whether to charge Ligot with plunder for allegedly amassing more than P100 million in pesos and dollar deposits from 2001 to 2008.

But Abigail Valte indicated that the Ombudsman should act on the suggestion of some senators regarding Ligot's alleged ill-gotten wealth.

"Such initiatives should come from the Office of the Ombudsman because, as we all know, there are certain intricacies of the law that we have to follow," Valte said over government radio dzRH.

"It's rather clear that ... we should punish those who committed transgressions, and those who should wait: this process should already move," she said.

Valte reminded the President's mandate that the PMA that charges should be filed against those identified in ill-gotten wealth cases, as well as the prosecutors involved in the controversial plea bargain with Garcia.

"We've seen over the past few months, since this issue about the plea bargain with Carlos Garcia came out, how it appeared that it was unclear to the prosecutors who they were supposed to represent—the interest of the nation or that of others," Valte said.

"Being a lawyer myself, I think[] prosecutors should look after the interest of the country," she said. *With a report from Vincent Cabreza, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

SHOULDER ARMS PMA cadets march past the motto of the academy during the homecoming parade when the 1,828 alumni troop the line and inspect the assembly of cadets.

Absent Trillanes is hot topic

From page A1

showed up at the parade grounds in identical black shirts printed with a loaded message: "Armageddon is not part of my discipline."

It appeared to be a throwback at Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV (Class of 1995), who has been under fire for his "unclassified" treatment of the late Angelo Reyes (Class of 1966), a former retired Philippine chief, at a Senate hearing on alleged corruption in the military.

But during the traditional parade, where all 1,828 alumni who attended the homecoming trooped the line to inspect the assembled PMA cadets, the Malolos Class members wore black jackets over their shirts.

They said they were not referring to Trillanes when asked for reporters before the start of the parade. But they did not say who they were alluding to in their statement.

An Ilarlad mother told the reporters, Trillanes did not show up at the annual alumni homecoming.

Trillanes is the subject of text messages circulating among ex-personnels humiliating Reyes at the Jan. 21 hearing. Reyes' shock suicide 12 days later by the hearing added to the heat on the senator.

All in a family

Manuel Capoja, the president of Class of 1966 and Reyes' retired schoolmate, said there was actually no "anti-Trillanes" mood among the alumni.

Lopez said all PMA graduates now belonged to a family, which was why the alumni present at the homecoming did not bear a grudge against the senator for being overbearing at the Senate hearing.

"We police our own ranks. If one are doing something wrong, we tell you. [The alumni's chastisement of Trillanes] is being delivered through the instructor time. Even his classmates told him [off]. If he shows up and he comes over, we will greet him. We will talk to him," Capoja said.

Some of Trillanes' relatives attended the homecoming.

Eight of Reyes' relatives took part in the parade. They wore identical coats in combat gray, apparently in deference to Reyes' death.

Jacinto Ligot (Class of 1976) and Carlos Garcia (Class of 1971), both former military comptrollers and both on the carpet for unexplained wealth, never set around. But some of their classmates were present.

Just in keeping with the homecoming organizers' request, the multicolor streamers bearing by the PMA bore simple messages and greetings for every class.

There were no banners alluding to the corruption scandal or Reyes' suicide.

Except for one: a blapsonts put up by the "Manila Group 1982" that read: "Let no one say our debt to the Filipino people. Let us not be dead and closed, or beholden any of them."

Suspended membership

Garcia's membership in the PMA Alumni Association (PMAAA) was suspended after he was convicted by a general court-martial in 2008 but not declaring his assets and for being a 63-grams-card holder.

PMAAA officials said Garcia was not dropped from the rosters—which by convict—amid a diagnose for a PMA graduate—because then President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo did not approve his conviction.

President Aquino has to uphold Garcia's court-martial conviction for it to be considered final.

Lopez said Class of 1966 was not against the congressional inquiries into the alleged corruptions in the military.

He said Reyes' classmates were glad that senators were now conducting their inquiry with less arrogance. "They should maintain being statesman," he said.

Former military budget officer George Hadjula, who close the whistle on the alleged slush fund in the military, did not attend the homecoming despite the Cad Roll his class, the Umalapit Class of 1981, was this year's host.

Roll his cronies, Brig. Gen. Benito de Leon, the chief of the AFP Finance Management Office who has accused him of lying to the Senate, was present.

'Apolitical' event

Rex Robles (Class of 1985), one of the founders of the Reform the Armed Forces Movement and a confidant of Reyes, declined to answer questions about the latter or the circumstances that led to his suicide.

Robles said the alumni wanted to keep the homecoming apolitical and had decided to allow Ellen Reyes grieving in public.

Indeed, high-profile alumni and their adopted cadets, mostly politicians, did not show up.

Also gone was the informal competition for the Best Dressed Class and the Best Dressed Wives, which used to entertain the alumni and their families.

The scandal involving the purported corruption in the military was the homecoming's biggest story. It was the subject of conversations among both active and retired members of the police and military.

In a speech, the PMA superintendent, Vice Adm. Leonardo Calderon Jr., called for solemnity even as the admiral that the entire PMA and its alumni association were "being challenged and criticized" in light of the corruption exposé.

"I urge all alumni not to condemn or prejudge anyone until rulings and decisions are reached by the judicial authorities," Calderon said.

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Anti-RH bill solons vow stiff fight on House floor

By Cynthia D. Balana

PROLIFE congressmen will draw ranks to try and block the passage of the consolidated reproductive health (RH) bill when it is scheduled for plenary deliberations on the floor of the House of Representatives, according to Manila Rep. Ernesto Dagpatin.

Dagpatin, who described himself as a devout Catholic, warned the bill's main proponent—House Minority Floor Leader Edcel Lagman—of a "passionate debate" and "stiff opposition" on the floor.

Lagman, on the other hand, countered that proponents of the bill have had the numbers to finally pass it. "The measure enacts into statutes in schools and promotes government support for both natural and modern birth control methods, among other things.

Echoing the opposing arguments, Bagatsing said the bill was a direct affront to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

"Personally, as a Catholic, I think this is a direct affront to 83 percent of our population who are Catholics. This is a question of faith," Bagatsing told the reporters in an interview.

Bagatsing also said there was no need to legislate such a bill or to provide yearly appropriations for it since reproductive health and family planning programs had been in existence in the country "even before the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos."

He said new appropriations, which could run up to P2 billion a year, would be better used for other programs such as to send more scholars in college, improve people's productivity and generate more jobs.

"I believe that we have other priorities we intend to. The Philippines can raise without this bill, anyway. Everybody casting in local governments can do which have the budget for it, so why do we have to put money for that?" he said.

He proposed instead that congressmen pushing for the bill use their push barrel to finance its implementation.

Bagatsing said that family planning was best left to the couples themselves.

"We have to and short of it is that things are running already and have existed for so long so why does Congress have to give its imprimatur? It's just leave it to the couples," he said.

Bagatsing pushed instead for the passage of his anti-abortion bill, which would prohibit abortifacients from being sold over the counter without a doctor's prescription.

On Wednesday, the House committee on appropriations approved the allocation of funds for programs mandated by the reproductive health bill starting in 2012.

Lagman clarified that no new appropriations was earmarked for the initial implementation period. The funds, he said, from existing sources would remained in the current General Appropriations Act for reproductive health and family planning in the Department of Health and Philippine commission budgets would be used.

Pinoys in newest hotspots safe—DFA

THE PHILIPPINE embassies in Libya, Yemen and Bahrain have advised Filipinos in the three countries to stay surety from areas where violent mass protests have been erupting, the Department of Foreign Affairs said yesterday.

"The embassy is coordinating with the Filipinos in Benghazi, including a Filipino priest, who said they are taking the necessary precautions in light of events there. We have advised the other community members to stay calm and to avoid troubled areas," Ambassador to Libya Alejandrino Ricomo said.

On Friday, soldiers were deployed on the streets of Libya's major city of Benghazi after a "day of anger" protest against the government.

Some of the 20,000 Filipinos were affected by the turmoil, the DFA said in a statement.

In Yemen, Charge d'Affaires Ernesto Tugo said the embassy was in contact "on a daily basis" with Filipino community leaders in Sanaa and that they were "relatively safe."

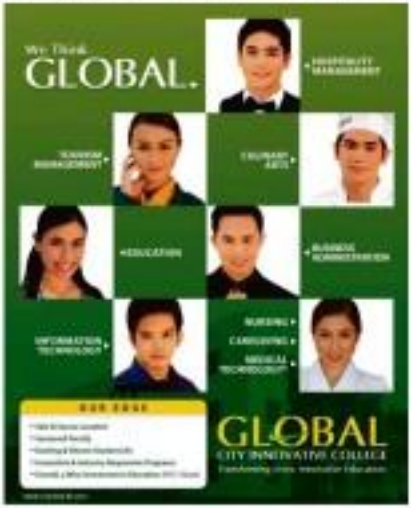
"Nonetheless, we have advised them to exercise caution and avoid areas of protest," he said.

In Bahrain, Ambassador Carmen Yap-Baljo said the embassy had issued an advisory to Filipino community members in the country, advising them "to remain calm, stay indoors and avoid any areas of protests."

"There have been no reports of any Filipinos harmed during the protests actions," she said.

There are around 35,000 Filipinos in Bahrain, according to the DFA.

Bahraini troops forcibly removed a protest camp in the capital, Manama, on Friday. Fifty people were reported injured. AFP



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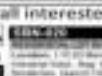

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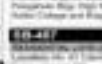

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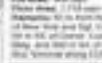

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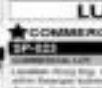

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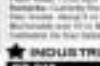

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Flying high ...

From page A1

trap with a wide smile and gave them a blessing.

Capt. Felimon C. Luna's quarter hour for the Pope began during the latter's first visit to the Philippines.

He was assigned to help the Pope for the duration of the visit on Feb. 19-21, 1981, with an itinerary that started in Manila, then on to Cebu, Davao, Bacolod, Iloilo, Legazpi and Cebu.

Now retired Iberia Philippine Airlines (IPAL), Luna meticulously attends to his memoirs, among which are documented those most important three days with John Paul.

Luna joined IPAL in 1961. During the Pope's 1981 visit, he was then the highest officer in command of the Boeing 727, a mid-sized, narrow-bodied, three-engine jetliner first introduced in 1963, and which became the most popular commercial jet liner in the world until replaced by other variants in 1984.

The visit was an unforgettable one for Luna and his crew. The aircraft specially assigned to John Paul had undergone a complete makeover to accommodate the Boeing to make it more comfortable and physically more befitting the Pope's stature.

"The interiors were refurbished, the curtains changed, some fixed tables installed for meals. The members of crew were down from 211 to about 150, with wide spaces which helped make the flight very comfortable," recalls Luna.

The seats were revamped by an entourage of 20,120 that included security and all eight decked groups from Rome. (A point of interest is that after every flight to ordering a reconfigured plane boasting a dignitary, the plane is returned to its normal state.)

No pictures

What were Luna's specific duties?

He replies simply: "Anything inside the airplane was my responsibility, save which I had complete authority."

His duties is not as simple as it appears.

One problem involved a ban on picture-taking, which someone banning Filipinos were fellow.

Luna recalls taking his crew aside and telling them that no exercise discipline because we deal with Jews. We also requested that the 75 million Filipinos, as far as not cause embarrassment and just follow the rules. If I catch anyone taking pictures, I will bump him off at the next stop."

Happily for Luna, the mission when the Pope gave him two rosaries as a memento was officially recorded—and he was given a copy of the photograph recording the Papal Mission and IPAL. (He says he has had a whole saddle of reproductions distributed to friends.)

The other problem involved people in high places wanting to join the papal flights and who exercised all means to be among the anointed few.

The passenger manifest was personally coordinated by then IPAL president Roman Cruz Jr with the Papal Nuncio, but it still didn't prevent some people from trying to get in through the backdoor.

Fine dining in the sky

The Pope's meals were prepared in coordination between Iberia representatives and IPAL.

Luna recalls special orders of fresh salads, veal and Italian wines. Depending on flight requirements, there might be breakfast, merienda and dinner.

"All I can say is that there was fine dining up there in the sky. But the Pope himself didn't eat a lot," he says.

To the question of whether a food taster was on board, Luna says that if there were, the person came from the Pope's contingent from Rome.

Luna says a food taster was present on domestic airshuttle configured flights for Dictators Ferdinand Marcos, Fidel Ramos and Joseph Estrada that he piloted. He says he has had the honor to ferry the late President Corazon Aquino during her term. He confirms that unlike other presidents, she took astronomical flights, thanking in ahead of time passengers and reserving only a number of seats in first class for her retinue and leaving the rest to paying customers.)

'The Pope at my back'

Another problem that Luna had to deal with during the Pope's visit was the suggestion from higher-ups that a "proving flight" was needed.

A proving flight is undertaken whenever an airplane is deemed marginally acceptable to take off from or land on an untested, and therefore "dangerous," airport. It is a very expensive undertaking utilized for the protection of VIPs.

John Paul's itinerary included the airports of Bacolod, which was then considered inherently hazardous with a short runway, and Legazpi, whose runway was right beside Mayon Volcano, with a small hill on the approach.

Luna, who had flown into all those airports earlier, put his reputation on the line. He told the higher ups that there was no need for the proving flight, and that he would personally confirm their safety.

"Besides, I have the Pope at my back. Nothing can go wrong," he recalls saying.

And nothing did.

Luna says he took his religion more seriously after meeting John Paul.

Eleven years after that experience, he sends his wife Dina Cuevas on a Roman holiday and attended a Mass that turned out to be officiated by the Pope himself. Pure: it simply a happy coincidence?

A Filipino can leave such the couple on a tour of the Pope's present appointments, the place for papal vestments and jubilee, and the "Crying Room," a room off the Sistine Chapel where a newly elected pope is taken and given the papal clothing.

(We found on Dina Cuevas's blogspot that this type of tour of the Vatican offered by Hotel de Natale costs 3,000 euros, which he declares as a "once-in-a-lifetime splurge." Set Bells and Whistle Luna never given the time for free!)

Seeking higher purpose

In his retirement, Luna has taken to updating his albums on the John Paul, doing stupendary work at home, and reading the more than 2,000 books in his library.

Most of the books are about aviation, but slowly his interest is "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" by Richard Bach, a former US Air Force pilot. Listed as one of the "spiritual classics," the book is a fable of self-improvement and seeking a higher purpose in life.

Reviewing his own life, Luna says 73, feels he has made the right decisions, avoided the many temptations of his youth, and provided a good example to many.

Much of this he accredits to having even early in his life the beloved Pontiff to be humbled in deep his many-year-but lucky.

Pastor on record

Pope John Paul II's heartfelt devotion to the Eucharist, coming just over six years after his death and beating by a few days Mother Teresa's three-record beatification in 2003.

Early this year, Pope Benedict XVI declared that the cause, attributed to John Paul, of a French nun who suffered from Parkinson's disease was miraculous.

Those who have had significant encounters with Pope John Paul II are requested to e-mail the author at bbpcarlos@yahoo.com.

CAPT. EDUARDO LUNA (inset) keeps this photo as one of his most prized mementos. It was taken aboard the 727 plane that he flew all over the country for three days with Pope John Paul II aboard. He is shown accepting rosaries from the Pope's aides.

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Want to be hip? Go into farming, say CHEd, GK

By Tara Quintundo

THEY'RE PUTTING the "trendy" in farming.

In a time when college students would rather become nurses, chefs and seafarers, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the anti-poverty NGO Gawad Kalinga (GK) have partnered to give agriculture a makeover and attract more students to the rather unpopular course.

The CHEd and GK on Friday launched the Agricultural Productivity Enhancement Project, a five-year program that aims to establish "village universities" as the new breeding ground for agri-entrepreneurs and empower communities through additional revenue generation.

The project will "establish a model agri-ecological tourism farm that will showcase appropriate and viable agricultural technologies" and also provide a livelihood for family beneficiaries, the CHEd said GK said in an agreement signed Friday.

You reap what you sow

In essence, the project hopes for students to learn by doing—a school experience that "translates classroom theories into real-time scenes."

"This agreement with CH, they're trying to make agriculture attractive to students through a certain amount of entrepreneurship. So you work with the land, in agriculture, but you develop a business," CHEd Chair Pat Licuanan told the hoi polloi.

"Students will be studying and researching, because they'll be doing things in the field that are entering cheir money," she said.

Nine agri-oriented state colleges and universities have signed up for the project—Don Mariano Marcos Memorial State University and Mariano Marcos State University in Region I; Isabela State University in Region II; Aurora State College of Technology, Polytech Agriculture State College, Central Luzon State University, Pampanga Agricultural College and Tarlac College of Agriculture in Region III; and Benguet State University in the Cordillera Administrative Region.

Livestock and crops

Using locally abundant resources, each university would be required to raise livestock, cultivate endemic crops and develop highly viable products such as virgin coconut oil, vegetables, mushrooms, peanuts, bananas, abaca fiber, honey, cubed eggs, chips and pasta.

Communities may also take part in the project by contributing farm labor, thus earning money for themselves from the yield.

Viable business

"State universities and colleges have some of the technical expertise. All of them have their own products. And if you match that with people who are good with (marketing and so forth, you will have a viable business," said Licuanan.

According to the agreement, the CHEd will fund the first year of the project, estimated at P400,000 per university, to cover farm implements, personnel services, transportation, communication and other incidentals.

GK, the same organization that has built homes for the poor using their sweat equity, will supervise farm operations and identify family beneficiaries.

Licuanan said agriculture courses were among the courses with low enrollment, with students preferring trendier majors like nursing, hotel and restaurant management, information technology and maritime studies.

Courses in agriculture, fisheries and science and technology are among the "underenrolled" courses in higher education institutions, said the CHEd chair.

"So much of it (college courses) is losing trendy. Maybe being on the farm isn't trendy, but there's a spin that you could put on farming really, and we're trying to make it an entrepreneurship. There must be ways of making farming more attractive," Licuanan said.

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NORTH LUZON | KULINARYA NG TISA AT THE CABANAYS
Registration Starts At 9:00 AM | Auction Proper Starts At 10:00 AM

VISAYAS | L'FISHER HOTEL, BACOLOD CITY
Registration Starts At 12:00 Noon | Auction Proper Starts At 1:00 PM

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MANILA OFFICE: BRAND OFFICE:

Ordeal's not yet over for Sally's kin

By Jolo M. Aurelio

GUIUNGAO ORIENTAREO, Isabela and two children were set to leave for China early yesterday to visit her daughter, Sally Villanueva, for the last time.

But with the postponement of Sally's execution order reprieve? but the family's elation over the reprieve is only temporary for Sally and the two others Filipinos convicted for drug smuggling and scheduled for execution early next week.

"We are still somewhat nervous because the decision is only temporary," Ordinario said in a phone interview.

Ordinario cannot bring himself to say the word "execution" or any of its equivalents.

Dreaded word

"As of now we are still waiting for word from the government regarding our flight to China because of the postponement ... of that," he said, halting at the dreaded word.

The word the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) had informed the family that their trip had been canceled. But Ordinario said they should still be allowed to go to China to see their daughter.

"My family, all of us, misses her so much. We are asking the government to allow us to visit her still," he said.

On Feb. 11, China's Supreme People's Court affirmed the death sentences of Sally, 32, 42-year-old Ramon Credo and 28-year-old Elizabeth Batain.

On Friday night, however, China's highest court postponed execution after Vice President Jejomar Binay met with Chinese officials in Beijing.

The family feared the good news after one of his sons came home on Friday night and whispered the good news in Ordinario's ear.

Ordinario, his wife Edith and two children were supposed to leave left for Beijing at 7 a.m. yesterday. Since they are afraid the trip to see Sally may not push through at all.

"The DFA has not contacted us to tell us when our trip will be. We are afraid it may not materialize. We are personally appealing to the government," Ordinario said.

"I want to be with my daughter, while she is still ... you know," he said.

Answered prayers

Ordinario said he is thankful that their prayers have been answered for now.

The family called on the government to make sure that the death sentences of the three Filipinos on death row will be commuted and their lives spared.

"We hope that my daughter will be acquitted because now now is almost a year that she is not in Manila for this," Ordinario said.

'A gesture of friendship'

From page A1

bilateral sentiment and spokesperson for the Chinese embassy, after being briefed by the Beijing-are this development by the Supreme People's Court of China to suspend the executions.

"This is the same as when you take time consideration the request of a friend. That's why this happened," he said.

Binay returned home last night after a 36-hour visit to China that brought time and hope to three Filipinos facing execution there.

He quoted the Supreme People's Court decision postponing the executions as "within the scope of Chinese law."

"It's very clear there is a process, about that process, we are not certain. Maybe it will lead to a change in penalty," he said, adding that he did not want to speculate.

He said the Chinese decision to suspend the executions was "historical" that China had always prided the rough with death penalty cases in the past.

"It is a sense, it's a big victory," said Binay.

He said that he was happy, "the fact that there's a stay of execution, and that enough."

Prayers did it

"I think prayers did it. I don't know if you'll believe me but I never lost hope," Binay said.

The Chinese embassy said it was not authorized to comment on Ordinario's statement or offered anything in return for the stay of execution.

"We owe to Beijing is a statement in the special friendship and goodwill between the Filipinos and Chinese people," Binay also said.

Binay said "no concessions or promises were made" in exchange for the reprieve.

There was no time for such discussion, he said.

Outgoing Foreign Affairs Secretary Alberto Romulo said in a statement yesterday "I welcome the postponement of the execution of the three Filipino nationals within the scope of Chinese law."

"I join President Benigno S. Aquino in thanking the Chinese government for receiving Vice President Jejomar C. Binay. The President's decision in sending Vice President Binay to China was timely," he said.

The announcement of the postponement was made last Friday by Binay's media office which released a statement saying:

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Open-ended

JUST WHEN it seemed as though nothing could be done, a welcome crack made itself evident. Philippine Vice President Jejomar Binay, on a desperate trip to Beijing to ask for mercy on behalf of three Filipino OFWs sentenced to be executed for drug trafficking, announced that his trip, which the Chinese government had initially resisted, had borne fruit. The Chinese government would stay the three executions for an undetermined amount of time.

EDITORIAL

"The Philippine side stated that it fully respects China's law and the verdict of the SPC [Supreme People's Court], and expressed its sincere appreciation to China for the decision of the SPC to postpone the execution within the scope of Chinese law," read a joint statement from the two governments released late Friday.

Binay's unexpected diplomatic success came mere days before the planned executions. Ramon Credo and Sally Villanueva were slated for death by lethal injection on Monday in Xiamen while Elizabeth Batain was due for the same fate Tuesday in Shenzhen. The three had been sentenced to death for the crime of drug trafficking.

Though the announcement of the stay is welcome news, there is still much to do in order to save the three Filipinos on death row; the ultimate goal of the Philippine government is to convince the Chinese officials to change the three Filipinos' sentences from death to life imprisonment.

The unfolding events in Beijing underscore two important points. The first is the question of just how good our relationship with China is. It didn't start off well. When the death sentences were first announced last week, it seemed as though the Philippine government's efforts were not only in vain, but that our officials were being humiliated in the process of trying to save the three.

President Aquino had admitted that the Philippines' no-show at the Oslo awarding of the Nobel Prize was an attempt to change Chinese minds about the executions. The Philippines' deportation of several Taiwanese citizens to China instead of Taiwan is believed by some quarters to be linked to the same goal. The Chinese refused to budge, citing that the three had been found guilty in accordance with Chinese law. It seemed as though the Philippine officials' jumping through Chinese hoops were all for nothing—until the dramatic change of events Friday night.

The joint statement read: "The two sides exchanged views on a wide range of issues concerning bilateral relations, including judicial cooperation. The two sides expressed the determination to work together and make joint efforts to further strengthening the relationship of strategic cooperation." The goal is to find a solution that will save the three lives while remaining true to Chinese law.

The other, perhaps, more important, point is that the Philippine government needs to take much better care of the countless OFWs around the world, particularly those charged with all sorts of crime. Often called modern-day heroes, the OFWs deserve the Aquino government's full attention as soon as they are accused of crimes—and not when they are already on their way to the gallows. To do this, the government also needs to crack down on the syndicates and dealers who are turning the country's most precious exports into drug mules; these criminals are among the true evils in the world today; the blood of any OFWs executed is on their hands.

Beyond that, it is up to the Department of Foreign Affairs to further increase its vigilance and improve its ability to monitor the status of Filipinos traveling the globe. The Philippine government needs to be able to assure OFWs that should anything go wrong, the government will be there posthaste to lend legal support when the cases are still fresh and not when the last remaining means are prayer and last-minute missives like Binay's.

Only then will the traveling Filipino workers be accorded the respect they deserve. Only then will the Philippines know that their citizens across the world's many borders without suspicion, intent to live in peace, free from persecution and extortion.

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Perfect drug mules

PUBLIC LIVES

Randy David

HOW ODD we become one world's favorite punishment regime for capturing "drug queens and bosses." How have Filipinos become the favorite scapegoats for such high-ratio drugs? The reports say there are nearly 60,000 Filipinos are being held today for drug traffic lying in various jails all over the world. Of these, 200 are denounced as Chinese prisoners alone. These are alarming figures by any measure. Who are these Filipinos? How did they get into this criminal trade?

A cursory look at the profile of the three Filipinos currently awaiting executions in China for drug trafficking, and another one detained in a Thai prison, suggests that all of them left the country as part of the exodus of Filipino seeking work abroad. Whether they knew it or not, they all appear to have been recruited by international drug syndicates run by West Africans.

Ramon Credo, 42, was caught smuggling more than four kilos of heroin into Xiamen in December 2008. Four days earlier, Sally Villanueva, 32, was intercepted in the same city while smuggling more or less the same amount of heroin. Elizabeth Batain was arrested in Shenzhen in May 2008 for possession of almost seven kilograms of heroin. In the other hand, Flory May Tandoc, who worked as a nurse for an African couple in China, has been in a Thai prison since her arrest in 2009 for carrying almost the same kilograms of heroin in one of her bags. These three Filipino women are not typical drug couriers. They have ruled identities as working migrant women. That is what makes them relatively "invisible."

The world's biggest producer of opium is Afghanistan, followed by Burma. As such, this suggests a path for drug smuggling. From the poppy fields of Afghanistan, the opium first finds its way into Pakistan, and from there to the rest of the world. Or, the opium leaves Burma, they wind up in Bangkok after being smuggled through the porous borders of northern Thailand, Vietnam and Laos. The Philippines is neither a producer nor a destination for heroin—nor it is a strategic transshipment hub. It appears that the drugs could be quickly offloaded at any point of the country's long unpatrolled coastline. They are then repacked and shipped out through our airports with the help of Filipino drug mules, who are increasingly made in our short-term tourism accommodations.

In the past, Europe and North America were the destinations of this lucrative trade. Today, given the shift in economic fortunes, China—with its new generation of millionaires and rising middle class—has become the principal market for these illicit and expensive drugs. Once again, our proximity to the giant next door is shaping our circumstances as a people.

My colleagues in the University of the Philippines Professor Ricardo Zarate, who studied patterns of drug use in the Philippines for many years, used to express surprise whenever the police announced a drug bust yielding huge amounts of number of heroin. He was certain there were not enough heroin addicts in the country to consume that much heroin. The country's draggish economy could not support a steady market for such drugs, he said. These seized drugs could only be meant for export, to those days, long before the Americans launched the war on drugs, the destination was the United States. The US market however radically shrank following aggressive bans on the cultivation and trade conducted by American authorities.

Like multinational companies, global drug syndicates visit the side of changing economic conditions. Nowadays it was the African continent, today it is the China market. While China has instituted an enduring transversal smuggling network in its territory, the opening of its economic borders, which is responsible for its gigantic economic dynamism, has brought with it all the problems associated with globalization. People from all over the world are pouring into China to help build and to partake of its newfound prosperity. Among them are our own people.

In the last 24 years, Filipinos have joined the ranks of the world's most mobile and ubiquitous world scatterers. The Filipino passport has become the most recognizable symbol of the economic refugee. This document signals to every immigration officer the presence of an uprooted human being who will accept any kind of work for the most miserable pay in the many parts of Filipino overseas labor deposition. In the face of the OFW was the main social safety net in the Middle East. With the feminization of migration, it became, not long after, that of the domestic helper and caregiver, busy at becoming that of the nurse, the seafarer, the office worker, or the young Ilonas information technology professional.

These shifts in the pattern of global travel and migration must surely have been noted by transnational drug syndicates. In the Philippines overseas workers that have found the perfect mules. Their financial need is great and often desperate. Once they accept the job, they take risks whose dimensions they are not fully aware of. Anecdotes in English, but preparing for the worst, they are also resourceful. They have their own set of different situations. Migrants like these are familiar faces in every port, and they carry certain penny wads before the naked eyes. So compartmentalized and layered are their disguises with the drug packages that when they are caught, no one comes to their rescue. Their arrest does not lead the authorities to the core of the syndicate they serve.

Indeed, they are victims of a system. But, who is to blame? The long unpacking of capitalist dynamics, or the secrecy that pushes them out of their own country to seek work in unfamiliar lands?

* * *

public.lives@gmail.com

Love on!

MOMENTS

Fr. Jerry M. Orbos, SJD

* * *

I don't know how fast, cheats and throws feet to the end of the day and reward the end of their lives, assuming that they have disposal people, especially the last, the least and the poorest. Many of what rightfully belongs to them. Greed for money and power can literally blind us. When money becomes our God, goodness and memory of the heart go out of our sight.

* * *

To repeat, if only to emphasize what I wrote once. The good thief, in the end, was good, but he was still called a thief.

* * *

If going for "extra mile" in our giving and forgiving orders to difficult, try thinking of how many times our loving Father has gone out of His way for us. He who has received much must give much in return. He who has been forgiven much must also love much.

* * *

It is wrong to think that we are doing the Lord a big favor when we give and forgive. On the contrary, the act of giving and forgiving is good for us! Giving gives us satisfaction, and forgiving sets us free! Again, only with the heart of one who has experienced what the world calls foolishness or pass pleas stupidity.

* * *

We join the Filipino people in thanking the Chinese government for granting a reprieve on the execution of Filipinos convicted of drug trafficking. Our bishops and President Aquino himself have asked us to storm heaven with our prayers. Vice President Jejomar Binay in his statement before going to China said: "I carry with me the prayers of the Filipino people that clemency could be granted on humanitarian grounds." We, prayer-ers, say: Let's pray on!

* * *

As we go the "extra mile" in our giving and forgiving, please don't forget that our God is a God of surprises, and He is generous beyond our expectations and imaginings. We will be surprised how a little generosity on our part can give us untold rewards. Be generous to God, and He who is never outdone in generosity will give you a hundredfold in return, in this life and beyond.

* * *

In my younger days, I often could not quite understand what Papa and Mama would tell us as elders, as caretakers, as readers and as parents in situations where the other person would want to demand, to complain, or even to fight back. How elder kind (hopefully aware), I see a lot of wisdom in their words of advice and their very examples to us. The bottom line is, you can't go wrong when you take the "senior side." Indeed, great abounds when you go beyond the necessary, the expected and the required.

* * *

At the end of our lives, it is better to be thankful that we loved too much than that we did not love enough. Yes, may we learn no or little regrets that we loved too little, too late.

* * *

Bishop Alejandro invites you to a Day Recollection on "Caregiver Burnout" on the held on Feb. 26, 2012, 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at the Sanctuary Hall of Christ the King Seminary. For inquiries please call 373-7262 / 998-2598 / 09175437849

* * *

A moment with the Lord:

Lord, help me to close in, and not to stop giving and forgiving. Amen.

May House continue impeachment now?

IN GOVERNANCE's vision of Representative (Feb. 15, 2011), the Supreme Court affirmed the Commissioner on Justice of the House of Representatives to continue hearing the two complaints filed by former Rep. Felix Fernandez Rexinger and by Secretary Rosario G. Gutierrez. It also lifted the status quo ante order that suspended the hearing. Question: May the House continue the hearing immediately even if the decision has not attained finality?

First, a brief background. Impeachment refers to the power of Congress to remove from office the President, Vice President, members of the Supreme Court and the constitutional commissioners, and the Ombudsman.

The Constitution granted the House of Representatives the "exclusive power to initiate all cases of impeachment" for "culpable violation of the Constitution, treason, bribery, graft and corruption, other high crimes, or betrayal of public trust." The Senate was given "the sole power to try all impeachment cases."

Rexinger and three others filed their complaint with the House secretariat on July 22, 2010, while Suero and five others filed theirs on Aug. 3, 2010. Thereafter, the two complaints were referred separately to the Committee on Justice, the Committee on Rules, and then to the House Session which—at 4:47 p.m. on Aug. 31, 2010—"simultaneously referred both complaints" to the Committee on Justice.

Minority Leader Arnulfo Fuentebella "sufficient in form and substance," the Committee directed Secretary to file her answer. Instead of doing so, the latter immediately went to the Supreme Court claiming that the Committee violated the constitutional proscription "no impeachment proceeding shall be initiated against the same official within a period of one year." The case hinged on the proper understanding of the words "proceeding" and "initiated" vis-à-vis the two complaints.

The proceeding. Penned by Justice Conchita Carpio Morales, the decision ruled that what the Constitution prohibits is the initiation of impeachment against the same official in the same year. It does not bar the filing of one (or more) complaints provided those multiple complaints are referred to the Committee on Justice on the same day and jurisdiction over proceeding is conferred by the Committee for all the complaints.

Citing Francisco v. House of Representatives (Nov. 10, 2003), which the herself also wrote, Justice Morales explained that the verb "initiate" means "to file the complaints and take action on it, a reference to the Committee on Justice." Impeachment complied with Congress' taking initial action on said complaints," Solicitor General Ma. Elena Bautista contended that the Committee on Justice "immediately referred both complaints" to the Committee on Justice.

Hence the Committee's alleged "indifference in form and substance," the Committee directed Secretary to file her answer. Instead of doing so, the latter immediately went to the Supreme Court claiming that the Committee violated the constitutional proscription "no impeachment proceeding shall be initiated against the same official within a period of one year." The case hinged on the proper understanding of the words "proceeding" and "initiated" vis-à-vis the two complaints.

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The proceeding. Penned by Justice Conchita

WITH DUE RESPECT

Artemio V. Panganiban

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The proceeding. Penned by Justice Conchita

The explained that the referral of the complaint to the Committee is a purely mechanical act that did not involve any discretion. In her view, the "initiation" should be reckoned only when the whole process deliberates and judges whether to send the Articles of Impeachment to the Senate.

Resumption of proceeding. Justice Teresita added, "No one should henceforth presume to tell the House of Representatives that any form of intervening order to call its elders and dignity such as the 'status quo ante order' and the 'Temporary Restraining Order.' The Court, she stressed, "was merely involved in resolving matters of law, not factual issues ... in terminating without hearing a factual hiatus of [several] days."

In his concurrence, Justice Lopez lamented the precipitous issuance of the status quo ante order. He noted that Secretary filed her petition on "9:43 a.m. of 23 September 2010," yet "the following day, during the en banc morning session of 14 September 2010, even the objections of [Associate Justice Carpio Morales] and Justice [Antonio] Carpio, Carpio Morales and Nachura, who asked for time to read the petition, the majority of this Court nevertheless issued a status quo ante order suspending the impeachment proceedings ..."

He said, "I received a copy of the petition only on the afternoon of 14 September 2010 and the oral arguments were already set that day. The petition was also 40 pages, excluding the annexes. All the issues should have been given time, at least an hour or two at the greatest in such urgent cases, to read the petition before voting on the issuance of the status quo ante order. Unfortunately, this was not done."

The status quo ante order was imposed to a mere inadvertency under that term effect distinctively, not via a judgment that would have taken effect only after 15 days. Former, its lifting should also have been immediate. After all, the petition is grossly defective, separate from the disposition determining the petitioner.

I will discuss the other questions next Sunday.

* * *

Comments are welcome at chiefjustice@yahoo.com and jbar@hotmail.com.

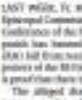
The Catholic Republic

LAST WEEK, Fr. Melvin Castro, executive secretary of the Episcopal Commission on Family Life of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines, denied reports that a Catholic parish has banned supporters of the reproductive health (RH) bill from receiving Holy Communion. He blamed supporters of the RH Bill for alleging the politics, claiming that it is "unfair" to the parishioners of the diocese behind the bill.

The alleged death sentence by the Parish Pastoral Council of Sorsogon de Ilaut Ante in Bacolod-Negros City de-scribed as "unfair" to the RH bill as an act tantamount to the commission of a mortal sin. The bill, says the statement now circulating online, "is inherently immoral and evil, recommending, supporting, defending, promoting and practicing its provisions and terms constitute a mortal sin against many of the ten commandments."

METHOD TO MADNESS

Patricia Evangelista



CBCP's Castro may claim that the statement is false, and that it does not come with the blessing of the CBCP, but he misleads when he claims he is unaware of its source. Sorsogon de Ilaut Ante's secretary Ella Dolo did deny to various news agencies that the parish posted the statement, but she admitted it was drafted by the parish pastoral council.

Dolo told ABS-CBN that "Yes, there is a statement but there was no announcement during the weekend. I don't know how it was leaked." The GMONEWS.news that the statement was unsigned, and insisted that it would never have released the statement as it was.

Castro calls the statements blunt propaganda, claiming its only goal is to create agitation and anger among Catholics.

The Church is forgiving, he says, for there is no need to punish those who support the bill, because they are still acting as a result of ignorance and goodwill.

Perhaps the Church was not forgiving in 2008, when Archbishop Fernando Capalla barred Catholic politicians who openly supported and advocated "any bill" legislation from receiving Communion. CBCP News Online quoted Dumaliang as saying at a gathering of Catholics that one cannot be called "a Catholic in good standing" if one can "publicly hold views that are contradictory to the Catholic faith." He said he had the right to refuse Holy Communion to such legislators, and added in his pastoral letter a no-communion policy for politicians promoting reproductive health and artificial birth control.

Bishop Deogracias Iñiguez, chair of the CBCP public affairs committee, did not call lawmakers pursuing favor-track propaganda, instead did Msgr. Achilles Delaya, media liaison officer of the Archdiocese of Cebu, who said that meetings will be made between the diocese for congressmen to refrain from receiving Communion.

Inasmuch as the San Jose's death statements is clear as it was a personal letter in the CBCP website written by one of its own bishops, and still the CBCP now speaks as if banning Communion to wayward members of its flock is an act unattributable to its sensitivity. Castro's musings is still the statement of the CBCP, and the bishops' silence on the said reprehensible gossips, but perhaps the defamation is in selling. The RH bill has already been established and is in no way in plenary vote in 2012 congressional appropriations season. With a majority of the population supporting the bill, and politicians publicly announcing their commitment, even online outrage over a leaked draft is a cause for CBCP concern.

Which is not to say the Church does not have the right to ban Communion, or excommunicate the growing proportion of the population that supports reproductive health. The lines are being drawn, too between Catholic and non-Catholic, but between those who support the RH bill and all it stands for, and those who don't. Religious, for a long time a source of work and vocation in Roman Catholic Philippines, is quickly becoming a matter of individual choice in the face of a 10-in-century leadership that calls to condom a mortal sin, and sexual intercourse the severest of sins. There is nothing wrong with the Church's interference in national issues, and the manner by which it deals with its flock. The Church is not a democracy, and the thousands of dollars donated are nuisance to the catholicism of a thousand other gods.

It is a Catholic government the public should fear, but has month the Aquino government announced the initiation of the RH bill to the 12-bill tax for presidentiation, consensus with his statements in the campaign of 2010. This month, after speaking with the CBCP, the bill was removed from the list, granting talks with the Catholic Church, of whom publicly announced they will not compromise. Even the most practical of considerations—public approval—does not justify the Aquino government's withdrawal of the RH bill from this year's priority list. The near-election of Joseph Estrada in 2010, in spite of the Church's lobby against the candidate they painted as a swimming lobby against the candidate they painted as a swimming lobby against the candidate they painted as a swimming

TALK of the TOWN

Please send feedback to
jpvmanila@inquirer.com.ph

—John Juan V. Sarmiento Jr.

TUNISIAN, EGYPTIAN REVOLTS

Youth links shake Arab world

By David D. Kirkpatrick and David E. Sanger

CAIRO—As protesters in Tahrir Square faced off against progovernment forces, they drew a lesson from their counterparts in Tunisia: "Advice to the youth of Egypt: Put vinegar or onion under your scarf for tear gas."

The exchange on Facebook was part of a remarkable ten-year collaboration that has given birth to more than a dozen youth movements dedicated to opposing Hosni Mubarak's iron regime and U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.

Young Egyptian and Tunisian activists have met in person at the annual meeting of the World Social Forum, traveled across borders to train one another in street tactics and studied psychological warfare in stand-alone rubber bullets and organizer interviews.

Secular expertise

They found their secular expertise in social networks with a decidedly radical bent, adapting nonviolent tactics to channel the energy of massive crowds with the sophistication of engineers and psychologists.

Breaking free from older versions of the Arab political opposition, they embrace the liberal individualist ideals most demonstrators in American cities do, though a Bolivian youth brigade—the clever marketing device borrowed from Hollywood.

Mubarak ties

In their meeting places they shed the Egyptian state-sanctioned nationalism of a virtual jail cell with a louder, with a more effective mirror—Arabic nationalism, the state of President Hosni Mubarak, a wealthy, entrenched leader and ruling party's power broker.

Considered the key component in the fallout until the youth-led elimination of the president's security apparatus, the principle lieutenants pushed him to flee to Sharm el-Sheikh, a luxurious resort on the Red Sea, and the prime ministry was replaced on Feb. 10, the day after the massive crowd in Tahrir Square filled the [illegible].

The definitive exit of the president's speech on Feb. 10, the officials said, [illegible] "It's not the end."

"It was probably more a mistake than his father was," said one [illegible] who [illegible] Mubarak's family was an "organization rather than for Mubarak's elimination situation." But the speech [illegible] Egypt's military to force the president out and more united of when they protested with a transition to a more [illegible].

Tools

Now, the young leaders are looking beyond Egypt. "Each is the fears that pushed Egypt, but what Egypt did will be the force, that will push the world," said Wael Ghonim, a Google executive and leader of the April 6 Youth Movement, which helped organize the Jan. 25 protests that led to the ouster of Hosni Mubarak.

Despite not a unifying motive, [illegible] where the presidency discussed sharing their experiences with similar youth movements in Libya, Algeria, Morocco and Iran.

"It's mostly groups of people in their early twenties who are fed up with the way their elected should be elected the head of [illegible] regimes," he said, adding that the same tactics could be used "in a country [illegible]."

Egypt's opposition youth are mainly [illegible] Muslim Brotherhood, the [illegible] Mubarak's main opposition for decades, [illegible] Mubarak's [illegible] Mubarak's [illegible] Mubarak's

Assistant Editor Tony Benjamin

Across the NATION

NPA clears, frees policeman

TRENTO, Agusan del Sur—The New People's Army (NPA) released in Bukidnon and in this province two of its captives.

The latest to be freed was PO3 Jorge Galvante of the Agusan del Sur police mobile group.

Members of the NPA's Morat de Arce Command handed Galvante over to local officials and negotiators in a remote village of this town yesterday.

In a statement, the NPA said an investigation of Galvante concluded that he had no crimes against the people.

The police officer was manning an antidrugs checkpoint in Palang Lupa here, along with civilian police officer and members of the provincial Bantay Bulilyaso, when taken by NPA rebels during a raid on Feb. 6.

Two civilians—including the 19-year-old son of a provincial antidrugs employee—were killed in the attack.

Rod Aguirre II, an NPA spokesperson, said Galvante would have been released sooner but the military continued its combat operations in the hinterlands of Compostela Valley and Agusan del Sur despite pleas.

"Small talks for the suspension of offensive military operations, the AFP-PNP went on with their doomed course operations," said the NPA spokesperson in Norway.

The latest negotiations were held in the hinterlands of Trento through Agusanon.

The guerrilla said the friendly live that killed two government troops on Feb. 13 in a rescue operation for Galvante was proof of military incompetence.

Aguirre said Galvante's release was also part of the NPA's effort to build confidence for exploratory peace talks ongoing in Norway between government and communist representatives.

In Bukidnon, the NPA also released retired Army sergeant Mario Brito to Hardy Cambarijan from Kitaotao Mendoza on Friday.

Brito was taken at an NPA checkpoint along the Davao-Bukidnon national highway at noon July 6.

"I'm glad at the leadership of the NPA's Front 53 yielded to where I asked for the release of Brito," said Mendoza, who had to trek for four hours to the release site.

As in Galvante's case, Brito was also released because he is a police escort, the NPA said.

Isabel Santiago, Front 53 spokesperson, said investigators showed that Brito had ceased to be involved in the government's counterinsurgency program.

"He has no direct culpability in serious violations committed against the revolutionary movement," Santiago said in a statement.

Authorities have declared a nerve blackout on the talks between government and guerrilla representatives in Norway. The latest attempt to bring back to life negotiations for a peace deal that could bring an end to one of the world's longest running insurgencies.

While Leftist militants decry the arrests of top guerrilla leaders in recent days, negotiators from the government think the arrests won't have any effect on the peace talks. Ariffey Bajao and Carlo Aguanon, Inquirer Mindanao

PO3 JORGE GALVANTE holds a copy of the Inquirer during captivity in a New People's Army camp somewhere in Bukidnon. Galvante has been freed by the guerrillas in a gesture that the guerrillas said should build confidence in the ongoing attempt to revive peace talks between government and communist leaders. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

DOH to hire 1,000 nurses to fill East Visayas gap

By Jose Cielito
Inquirer Visayas

CATARMAN, Northern Samar—The Department of Health (DOH) will hire more than 1,000 registered nurses in Eastern Visayas to help fill the need for nurses in the region's villages.

At the launch of the Improved Nurses for Health Deployment and Local Service (NIGHALS), a continuation of a program started by the administration of former President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, DOH officials said 209 of the more than 1,000 nurses would be assigned to Northern Samar.

Health Secretary Enrique Ona said the Aquino program was conceived to address the shortage of nurses in the provinces.

He said Catubig, a Northern Samar town with 45 villages, has only one nurse.

In Catarman, another Samar town, six to seven nurses were hired to serve 34 villages and a population of about 80,000 people.

He said the launching of the BN NIGHALS program was a sign of commitment by the Aquino administration to the delivery of health services to the poorest of the poor in remote provinces like Northern Samar.

The program would also give jobs to unemployed nurses who are mostly awaiting deployment overseas.

As of 2009, there were between 187,000 and 200,000 registered nurses in the country **were unemployed.**

Those who would be hired **under the program would** be deployed to areas that are of their **official** names or had nurses, he said.

Registered nurse Gladis Capitan, a beneficiary of the Ebl NIGALS program, graduated in 2009 and has been working for a leading company in San Juan City Hungry Eyes.

"I am happy that our national government had initiated this kind of project for us registered nurses. Through this program, not only can we use our skills as nurses but also extend help to the poor people in the provinces," Capitan said on Friday.

Capitan, a 22-year-old native of Catarman, will be assigned for six months to the Northern Samar Provincial Hospital.

With a report from Rachel Armeta, Inquirer Visayas

Talisay cop chief sued for sex assault on reporter

By Jhonnes Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—The police chief of Talisay City is facing rebel after he was charged with sexually assaulting a female reporter in his office.

The Cebu Daily News (CDN), a sister publication of the Inquirer, charged Supt. Henry Biñas with sexual assault for allegedly touching the breast of reporter Jessa Mae Acebedo.

Acebedo and CDN columnist Carmel Louie Matas in his office at the Talisay City police station.

Eddie Austin, legal counsel for the CDN, and CDN publisher and acting editor in chief Efren Mangaser Gloi a case against Biñas at the regional Philippine National Police office here.

In an affidavit, Matas said Biñas touched her breast and tried to kiss her after the had interviewed Biñas in his office last Feb. 8.

Matas said she was with reporter Robert Jabagat in Biñas' office about 9 a.m. in his office to keep her in the office to just but I did not intend to harass her. There was no malice intended," said Biñas who built Jessa Banks and has served as chief of Talisay City police station for the past two years.

Biñas said his joke was misinterpreted. "It was in good faith. If she was offended, I'm sorry," Biñas said.

Matas said Biñas called her four times after the assault but she did not answer the calls.

She said she felt "extremely violated and humiliated" and had trouble sleeping and concentrating on her work.

"Just thinking about the traumatic experience brings as much pain," Matas said.

Mangaser asked Chief Supt. Jupe Dareg, police regional chief, to take quick action on the complaint and stop Biñas from approaching Matas or sending intimidate or messages while the case was pending.

BIÑAS: It was in "good faith."

Biliran poll fraud case gets backing from Franciscans

BY RELIGIOUS leaders of the Franciscans International have expressed support for a campaign to declare fraud in the congressional elections in Biliran and hold recount of the vote by counted again manually.

Priests and lay leaders be hanging in the Franciscans group a regional manifesto during the Asia Pacific Regional Training Workshop on United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) recently attended by at least 70 members from various countries of the Franciscans International.

Fr. Santosh Dikia of Mumbai, India, Brother Tomas Hualiwe and Sabeyra Sioma, Sri Lanka and Sister Thee Cantwell, and several Franciscan nuns decided to support the people of Biliran in the campaign for a recount of votes during the workshop.

"We support the cause of the people of Biliran in their struggle for truth, transparency, fairness and honesty in the conduct of a credible election in their district in the last May 2010 elections," said a manifesto they signed.

The 70 delegates came from Switzerland, Thailand, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Papua New Guinea, New Delhi, India, Myanmar, West Papua and the Philippines.

They declared support for a petition at the House of Representatives Electoral Tribunal (HRET) asking the body to order a manual recount of the congressional voting in Biliran, which was won by Rogelio Espina amid charges of fraud.

The Franciscans International is a nongovernmental organization with links to the United Nations and sponsored by the Conference of the Franciscans Family.

A power outage marred the voting in Biliran. Espina was proclaimed winner just after power was restored.

"We are praying for and looking forward to a speedy revision and impartial decision that will reflect the real mandate of the people (of Biliran)," the Franciscans International said in the manifesto.

A group of nuns is leading a fund-raising campaign in Biliran to raise money for the petition that the group filed at the HRET.

People from all walks of life donated money to the group to pay for various fees needed in the petition.

Onion growers strike gold after 2-yr loss

CABANGAN CITY—After two years of heavy losses, onion growers in Bongabon, Nueva Ecija, have struck it big this production season.

Lualo Cuba, agricultural officer of Bongabon, said harvesting 3,500 hectares of red and yellow onions in their town have repaired higher yield and income.

Cuba said farmers were hoping that this would signal the revival of the onion industry in Bongabon, considered the onion basket of the country. Bongabon's onion farms supplied more than half of the total area planted to onions in Nueva Ecija.

But due to various problems, including competition with low-priced imported and smuggled onions in the market, many farmers started leaving the onion industry, the commodity's farmers and local officials said.

Some 3,000 ha are planted to red onions and 400 ha to yellow onions in the town during the current planting season, which started in November last.

Last year, several thousands of kilograms of onions harvested in Bongabon rotted in storage because farmers couldn't compete with imported onions sold at a very low price in the market.

"The conditions for growing and producing onions have become suddenly favorable to onion growers," Cuba said.

She said Agriculture Secretary Proceso Alcala requested the issuance of permits for the importation of onions.

A FARMER stands her plantation of onion stalks in La Trinidad, Benguet. In Nueva Ecija, farmers overharvest the two seasons in the hoping price of red and yellow onions. (CONTRIBUTED PHOTO)

INQUIRER Mindanao

THE INTERIOR of the new city hall of Tagum takes shape.

Tagum: From rural area to boom city

By Fritzie L. Lim
Tagum City

(first of two parts)

CLAD IN a white shirt, shorts and sneakers, the diminutive man steps by one of the hardwood stalls along the clogged Quezon Street in Tagum City, where long rubber and smoking grills characterize the otherwise wide, clean-swept place during an ordinary night.

He seems to the crowd of uniformed city drones and workers having dinner and many of them call him, inviting. He politely declines.

Away from the crowd and him by his nickname, "Chiong Uy," and he doesn't mind at all. There's really nothing to fuss about. Being called such, he says. Even if he is Bay Tao Uy, the mayor of Davao del Norte's capital city cum of Mindanao's newest banking-and-business center.

"I'm just a simple person. I'm more comfortable in being ordinary," the 56-year-old businessman-turned-politician says.

Since its first days as a city in 1998, the agricultural graduate has been at the helm of the former market municipality that used to be called home to coconut trees, and where tobacco-sniffing juvenile recruited residents with cash loans and barbecue sticks.

Transformation

The transformation of the round-capital into a booming metropolis is not entirely a deliberate target under Uy's administration. Making a comeback in 2004 after being defeated by the veteran politician Getulio "Strong" Gementiza (who would later become governor of Davao del Norte), the Chinese-mestiza—steeped business and leadership in Tagum.

"It is a combination of simple and strong political will that shaped what is now Tagum," according to Paul Velasco, a newspaperman covering Davao region since the 1970s.

"The development of Tagum speaks a lot about who really the mayor is. If he did not become a mayor and turned down to continue being a businessman, Tagum wouldn't look like what it is now, developed," Velasco says.

He recounts how he used to see the young Chiong Uy back in the days tending the family's store at the Magugpo (Tagum's former name) poblacion in what is now Quezon Street. Now look them, he says, Uy was known already for being simple and friendly then.

Uy began his political career in 1988 when he represented the then undivided Davao del Norte's second district in the provincial board.

At a young age, he was already taught by his parents in his resilient and resourceful—traits which became helpful when he plunged into politics and was elected to govern a city of 200,000 and with vast natural resources, Velasco says.

Politician's traits

"Manage properly and efficiently whatever you have right now," the mayor says on how he realized those traits as a politician. "Run your city as if you're managing an enterprise."

He calls that kind of leadership as corporate governance. Effective utilization of resources and efficient delivery of services are not just rewards. These are the musts.

"Since we're not blessed with rich natural resources like gold or tourist spots compared to our neighboring local government units (LGUs) like Compostela Valley or Davao City, what we do is we create value-added to each a way that businesses could thrive," Uy says. The same concept, he adds, serves as the driving force behind the progress of the small state of Singapore.

The city government under Uy sees to it that projects and programs are effectively and efficiently implemented. All infrastructure projects are being done by administration to eliminate corruption.

The city's equipments and facilities are properly managed and well-maintained. Rent materials for concreting and other road projects are produced by the city's asphalt mixing plant, thereby reducing considerably the cost of road and drainage projects.

The city also offers its equipment and services to other LGUs like Davao City, providing additional revenues to the city coffers. Tong-pers (greater money to maintenance) and disbursements are reviewed.

"We saved so much (government money) by eliminating corruption," he says.

Strategic location

Being at the center of its interesting natural rivals, Tagum's strategic location attracts to an influx of visitors virtually all days of the year. The Pan-Philippine Highway cuts through the city from north to south while the Davao-Bislig road cuts to the west.

With this, Uy says he sees to it that the city has enough good facilities to cater to the demands of visitors so to attract investments and revenues.

Billions of pesos were invested in the city's drainage system to correct the perennial flooding that used to hit the city proper during rainy months.

Adding to come-on to local and foreign tourists is a slew of festivals (an average of two each), showcasing the city's rich culture, tradition and, of course, delicious fruits.

The city is also known of its improved peace and order situation. The giant, in most parts, has been spared from bombings, kidnappings and other terror attacks plaguing other cities in Mindanao.

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The DFA should allow Filipinos to use their medical benefits when they visit or retire in the Philippines.

Imelda M. Nicolas
Chair, Commission on Filipinos Overseas (CFO)

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Lilen Monica Perla

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This section is dedicated to Filipinos overseas toiling on land and at sea, in factories, in construction sites and in the homes of the world to secure a better life for their families. These are their stories.

Gay couple exchange vows in New Zealand

By Babiel Cantos
Inquirer Visayas

NZ allows 'civil unions' that give same sex partners virtually the same migration, property and next-of-kin status as husbands and wives

ON A BRIGHT and breezy afternoon last December, Lawerance, 35, and Francis, 31, (not their real names), exchanged vows at a Lutheran Church in Christchurch, New Zealand.

They sealed their relationship in a 30-minute civil ceremony solemnized by a female Justice of the Peace and attended by the couple's friends. Francis and Lawerance included months-exchanged rings and vowed to love each other till death do them part.

Later, they performed the customary bouquet throwing, and popped champagne in a leaflet reminiscent before going for a photo shoot at a nearby garden.

It was the culmination of the couple's years of struggle to come to terms with their love, and to live as accepted for what they were.

New Zealand has not actually legalized same sex marriage but it allows a "civil union" that grants gay couples virtually the same immigration and matrimonial property rights, next-of-kin status and other social service benefits available to traditional heterosexual couples. Same disorder are available to women for such rites.

Lawerance and Francis' love story began in 2005 when they exchanged cellphone numbers in Cebu City.

Francis was waiting in the gate of his boarding house. Lawerance was on his way home when their paths crossed.

After several text messages, the couple began dating. Francis found Lawerance to be thoughtful and sincere. Lawerance also fell for Francis' caring ways.

Five years later, and thousands of miles away from where their story began, the two decided to commit themselves to a long-term partnership.

"It was make or break for me," Lawerance says, referring to his decision to return here a few months ago.

He then years, until had separated there, in 2007. Francis went to Taiwan to work for a money exchange company in New Zealand as a caregiver.

In June 2010, after Lawerance became a SE-registered nurse and obtained permanent residency status, the couple met again in Cebu.

"It was in August when I proposed to him in a taxi on the way home from a dinner in the Mactan area [located in Cebu City]," Francis says. "I gave him a ring and popped the question."

Lawerance's heart immediately jumped with joy. He felt his prayers were finally answered.

Without wasting time, he applied for a visa for Francis under the same-sex domestic partnership category.

"I had been working hard and hoping for many of our sacrifices—even surrendering on his migration lawyer and getting a driver's license so that I could drive him around when he comes to New Zealand."

A few months later, Francis arrived in Christchurch, just a few weeks after a 7.1 quake shook the city.

That was a trying first month, the couple recalls. Christchurch was still on severe books as strong aftershocks came one after the other.

The couple also quarrelled a lot about Francis's smoking, which he had promised to quit while still working for his church in Cebu. "It came to a point where I packed my bags and decided to go home," Francis recalls.

"But my insurance crept in. Having been raised a Catholic and having gone to a Catholic university in Cebu, I was full of guilt," he says. "I remember a recollection in college where a priest told me that being a homosexual was a sin."

The couple decided to seek spiritual counseling. Their counselors, a Catholic priest and a Methodist minister both said that "being gay was not a sin because they were made in the image and likeness of God." But both counselors, Francis says, were solemn on the sexual aspect of their relationship.

I prayed for a sign, recalls Francis, adding that it came from his elder sister. "She told me over the phone she respected and supported my decision."

Lawerance, on the other hand, was yet to break the news to his family. "I still can't tell them at this point. But I know they already have an idea," he grins.

Today the couple shares domestic responsibilities. They split household expenses, they alternately wash the car do the laundry, take the garbage out, and prepare dinner.

This month, Lawerance will start work at the Christchurch Public Hospital. Francis recently found a job as a plasterer in the city.

More than the work privileges that come with living New Zealand residents with a registered partnership, they are happy to have found a place where they are not discriminated against because of their sexual orientation.

"We found out that our relationship transcends the physical. We have become more confident with each other. This union has taught us to be more patient, and to be more prayerful to God," the couple says.

Five years ago, we dreamed of going to a place where we could express our sexualities. At least for each other, where society does not judge and condemn us," Lawerance says.

They say they have found it in New Zealand which passed a Civil Union Act in 2004.

The couple laments that some of their gay friends back home lack the opportunity to leave the country and honor, cannot live their dreams.

"It's high time for the Philippine government to recognize that we have the same rights as other Filipinos."

Last year, Argentina was the 10th country in the world to recognize same-sex marriage. The others are The Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Canada, Israel, Africa, Norway, Sweden, Portugal and Iceland. In this United States, same-sex couples can marry in five states and in Washington DC. Mexico City also allows it. Nepal recently passed its own same-sex marriage law.

Among the countries that recognize "civil partnerships" are Andorra, Australia, Austria, Colombia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Slovenia, Finland, France, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

FRANCIS AND LAWRENCE. Migration allowed them to live their dreams. They urged the Philippines to grant equal partnership rights to gays.

New policies to downsize migration ignore economic realities

By Rene E. Ofreneo
and Lorena B. Santamo

THE NEW administration of the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA), Carlos Cao, has an increasingly difficult task: handling a bundle of contradictory government policies on migration while supervising the processing of hundreds of orders and would be OFWs who line the corridors of POEA daily.

The National Economic Development Authority (NEDA) listed as item No. 10 in the following "Social Contract" deliverable of the Aquino Administration:

Social contract

"From a government that treats its people as an export commodity...to a government that creates jobs at home, so that working abroad will be a choice rather than a necessity."

It's a big policy declaration—and yes, not new. The 1995 Migrant Workers Law (RA 8042), crafted heavily following the execution of domestic worker Flor Contemplacion in Singapore, declared it as economic arena that "the State does not promote overseas employment as a means to sustain economic growth and achieve national development," and that the state "shall continuously create local employment opportunities for its" (Sec. 2.c). This policy thrust has been retained in the amended Migrant Workers Law (RA 10022) of 2010, which the Aquino Administration allowed to lapse into law.

The fact is that the government has been declaring since the mid-1970s that labor migration is an interim program, meant to ease local unemployment while NEDA's programs for a "labor intensive" export-oriented industrialization (EOI) has not taken off.

A shift in industrial policy, from import-substitution in the 1960s to EOI in the mid-1970s onward, did happen. But the EOI program has failed to deliver a job-full national economy despite a series of World Bank-supported "structural adjustment policies" (SAP) measures, i.e., trade liberalization, privatization and economic deregulation. As a result, the migration program has become permanently temporary and overtime, study-expanding.

PH's economic lifeline

Today, labor migration has become the economic lifeline of the country. The number of POEA-recorded migrants deployed annually has risen by nearly 60 times—from 36,035 in 1975, the initial year of the "temporary" migration program, to 1,422,586 in 2009. The rise in OFW remittances has been even more dramatic—$321.6 million in 1975, $1.2 billion in 1990, $6 billion in 2000, and between $15 billion to $16 billion a month today. The remittances, the country's "oil wells," support directly 25 percent of the population and sustain the growth of consumer-driven businesses, such as the 300 malls of Henry Sy and real estate firms of Manny Villar.

Not surprisingly, the GMA Administration did not bother with the migration-downsizing policy of the 1995 Migrant Workers Law; instead, it came up with a dichotomous "managing migration" policy. Under this concept, the government aspires to regulate migration by "a labor retention" export-oriented industrialization (EOI) has not taken off.

Many countries hosting OFWs will be covered by the new deployment ban

peace reversal; it declares that it does not encourage Filipinos to work abroad while it proclaims, at the same time, that it respects the decision of every Filipino to go overseas as "a legitimate option". The 2004 MOU Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) provided "saving overseas employment as a job generator, and yet it had a one-million-a-year deployment target!

Is gov't policy realistic?

Back to Social Contract No. 10: How to harmonize the NEDA, POEA and other government agencies' robust migration to a shorter where the labor market at home is bleak—three million unemployed, six million underemployed, 13 million working less than 40 hours a week and over 50 percent in the informal economy? How can labor migration be downsized and job creation at home be upgraded when the agencies industrial base has been stagnating and shrinking since the 1970s?

There is an inflation of explanations for the following sins—industrially—of the economy however, NEDA must accept the fact that the World Bank's EOI recipe did not work, due largely to the unlikely hope that the national economy was opened up, sans any clear industrial development compass. Look at how our successful Asian neighbors, from the Asian newly industrialized economies (NIEs) of the late 1980s to China and Vietnam today have all succeeded industrially, leaving us biting the dust.

As to the so-called "Dutch disease" impact of migration (whereby migration leads to currency appreciation and, thus, to remittance abundance), it should be emphasized that this is a latest-day phenomenon. Increased migration in the last four decades was due to the EOI failure, while the unabashedly dependence of the economy on migration today tends to further deepen the de-industrialization process.

How can the government phase out migration dependence if there is no planning in effort to fill up the industrial devastation?

Like the previous one, the new medium term development plan being ballyed by NEDA rehashes the old EOI program while ignoring the role of migration in the economy. There is no separate chapter on migration, no outline of how OFW savings and remittances can be mobilized in support of an alternative agro-industrial transformation at home, and no discussion on how the government regulation downsizing and agro-industrial upgrading shall be carried out.

Deployment bans

Ironically, the new law, RA 10022, may succeed in downsizing migration where NEDA's EOI has failed. In the name of migrant protection, RA 10022 has introduced two bold amendments that are likely to push the OFW deployment business out of business.

The first is Section 3 of the law providing for a ban in DFW deployment in countries which have not ratified the UN convention protecting migrant workers, have no laws protecting migrants and are not taking any positive measures to subscribe to these conventions and laws, including bilateral agreements with the Philippines. In the latest count, only 37 countries, mostly labor-sending ones, have signed on to these international conventions. Some of the big-ten OFW deployment countries have ratified these conventions.

Strict implementation of Section 3 means most of the countries hosting OFWs today are likely to be declared "no-deployment countries".

Foreign employers in the non-compliant countries who observe the POEA "Standard Employment Contract" (SEC) shall also automatically lose the right to hire Filipinos. Many OFWs on hotels have cannot go back to their employers—not into they leave the country as "tourists" and disappear among the numerous outsiders and factions "undocumented migrants".

Insurance requirement

The other amendment is reflected in Section 23, which has a 5-page provision requiring placement agencies to cover each deployed migrant with life and medical insurance involving at least $72 in annual premiums. Sounds good and protective of OFWs, right? However, one must clarify this insurance requirement is on top of the existing cash bond and excess deposit that each placement agency is required to make to meet contingent liabilities arising from the deployment of OFWs. This requirement is also distinct from the standard life and accident insurance, workmen's compensation and other social insurances already being provided by foreign employers in the host countries.

Dangerous incoherence

These punitive measures, which are more generous than the above-cited mandatory insurance, are covered by the standard liability insurance by the POEA. However, the additional mandatory insurance, by driving up the deployment cost of every OFW, is driving Filipinos out of the overseas labor market. No foreign employers are willing to accept the new additional insurance charges when they already have existing insurance and welfare programs for their foreign recruits.

To sum up, there is much policy incoherence and hypocrisy in the way the Philippines has pursued migration as an interim employment program and the way it now wants to downsize it without a clear industrial upgrading program.

The consequence of a half-assed implementation of RA 10022 in a country that still has to experience a full-blown industrial revolution are too detailed to imagine....Social Contract or no Social Contract.

Rene E. Ofreneo is Professor of Industrial Relations, University of the Philippines Lorenzo H. Santamo is a CEO of Life Assessment Solutions Corp.

NUVALI: All set with events for 2011

NUVALI, Ayala Land's 1,000 hectare premiere eco-city development in Laguna, is definitely set to bring fun and one-of-a-kind activities and events this year.

Three activities which NUVALI values as showed on the bustling, dividend way of living: commerce, environment and leisure that encourages responsible, responsible living is planned for a series of interesting, ballpark, forever development each nature. NUVALI's transport allows each residents as the space to avail while cost service of members with the natural environment and to activities. Unlike in the close of life, those. Carefree and the interesting on Calabarzon in Laguna, it is an area that encourages exciting activities that are of natural and ecological significance.

Family activities at Solenad

Activities from nearby communities to visitor from Metro Laguna or NUVALI's regular community activities.

The **NUVALI Weekend Bazaar** held every weekend night beside the hotel and dining center, Solenad, showcases unique products such as delicacies, homemade wines, accessories, handmade decorations, and home decor to name a few.

Activities and workshops like art classes, performances, theater shows and exhibitions on the Solenad activity area, with a capacity area of 1,000 people.

Kids can also experience running around in NUVALI's sprawling wide open landscape as they try the Easter egg hunters during the **Easter Day Hunt** in NUVALI.

A couple to cupid on March 26 can be amused on with NUVALI's commemoration of **Earth Hour**. The celebration will be held at Solenad Lake where activities to highlight the importance of energy management. With engaged performances from communities, entertainment, and one-on-one concerts, it would be amazed be awesome.

Get up close and personal with nature

Nature lovers will surely find a perfect home in NUVALI as they can explore and commune with the wonders of nature. Mountain and waterside trails can be found in **NUVALI's Eco-Olympics** on July 17. There will be a one-day hike on that would include an agility competition to get a chance to compete in the international jamboree. Other activities include a treasure hunt, tree ample and pole-planting, each of these to be conducted by the Ayala Foundation, Inc.

Partnered with the Ayala Foundation, Inc., NUVALI has been hosting the **Ayala Bonsainiaan Fair** quarterly. Set this year on January 16, May 21, August 20 and November 19, it is events manager-team program that showcases reduction, reuse and recycling principles.

Earth Day in April is a special event to NUVALI. An undertaking by distinguished artists will be showcased with environmental conservation and related as the theme. There are planned short stories as well as a tree-planting and encouragement activities as well as its conclusion and extension of the current conservation-wise environment.

Celebrating its 10th Anniversary, Ayala Foundation has in mind to host its **Green Festival** at NUVALI on June 4 and 5. Featuring a competitive game on its grounds, sustainable art practices ways on how Filipinos can lead a path of a being "green".

While a grand-of-kid fenders challenge is **The North Face's Green Camp Out** to set on March 26-27. This is deemed to be the first of its kind as groups have to learn and take the technical skills as they share their camping gears and camp out, encounter outdoor challenges and contests with other groups.

Dive in where the action is

NUVALI is making a name as an outdoor adventure destination as it celebrated many sports and extreme adventure events last year and will the support also with **Republic Watersports Inc.**, the name pursuing behind the famous wakeboarding facility in Laguna. The experienced wakeboarding faculty like trainers, will original basic and extended adventure under the development.

Let your feet take you to places

Will the other mountainous will get to challenge their minds, hearts and bodies as they run a trail still, inside. Inside, NUVALI on March 20 for **The Run Runner (TNR) Dream Marathon** at the 21, 10km, 5k second year. Having had 300 attendees in 2010, the idea of a return on the world marathon event which includes special training, and running sessions organized by the group of Jaime Rivera and other running experts, is considered by garnering a significant following in the running community.

Mountain biking is a competitive game spelled out to fastener has chosen Mountain Escapes as the featured expansion with a running event on NUVALI.

Pedal to the metal

NUVALI brings it to the fastest for exercise and fun ranked with the **NUVALI Dirt Weekend bike festival** on November 19-20 PC. The festival participants from 7,000 bike participants nationwide and abroad making the NUVALI's Weekend mountain fully marked as one of the biggest and most safe festivals in the country. Participants in over 10 years, as most over NUVALI's out to the 2nd, 2nd of Competitions for their favorite bike enthusiasts. With activities been now open and fully operational, competitions would include events such as the cross-country race, free rides, dirt jump, downhill competitions a 24-hour relay and a bike expo with exciting bonuses, homecomings and other activities. It promises to be the most anticipated biking event of the year in the Philippines.

Kick and pitch at the Fields

2010 launched NUVALI Cup with a bang for football and baseball athletes all across Metro Manila and CALABARZON, with more than 40 participating teams, the NUVALI Cup was a major case of talent and commitment to athleticism and sportsmanship. This year, NUVALI will again place its highlight baseball and football with the **NUVALI Cup 2011** in September. Expected to be a big-time tournament, the NUVALI Cup would feature the most talented athletes from the youth, collegiate and pro divisions representing teams from all over the country.

Best of both worlds

Metro Health Magazine partners with NUVALI again this year. Metro's Health All-stars Race is a one-day, grand sporting event that would involve **running and biking** through the scenic, natural and unique trails, in a circuitous and speed competition on June 2011.

Columbian Dominador partners with NUVALI for an **Adventure Race** this August. A contest designed to challenge the mental and physical limits of our competitors, it would involve trekking along NUVALI's scenic locations. Mixed teams of male-and-female, but adventure-seekers are invited to enter. Runners will have their chance to gear up and roll out their best athletic-o compete with rest consumer-in-place.

UFC: ultimate fridays champ

Continuing with most sporting action, February 5, 10 and 20 showcases the **Ultimate Fridays** fans their to League Foundation. A spectacular event, it also will implement as the Philippine Ultimate Experience, the tournament plays host to should local and international players, with the exciting semi-finals scheduled for March 6, awaiting rewards as pioneer finals on March 13.

Serve up

What better way to entertain summer other than to play beach volleyball. In May, NUVALI intends to host a **Beach Volleyball exhibition tournament** for the event and collegiate teams from Laguna and Metro Manila. It aims to promote the budding sport in the country.

Let's go south

Only 45 minutes from the Makati Central Business District, NUVALI aligns its activities with urban-improvement living, community development and ensuring conservation, among all of nature, while more of progress and community development.

The event updates and activities visit www.nuvali.com or call (049) 5-NUVALI (+63 (49) 555-0000).

At NUVALI, where people and nature thrive.

Sunday SPORTS

FERNANDO Montiel (left) and Nonito Donaire face off during the weigh-in.

Donaire goes after Montiel crowns today

Filipino Flash slight pick

By Ronnie Nathaniel Nathaniel

LAS VEGAS—Interim "The Filipino Flash" Donaire Jr. and WBC/WBO champion Fernando Montiel both made the limit. Featherweight Montiel (40-3-1, 31 KOs) tipped the scales at 125 pounds during an undisclosed weigh-in at official weigh-in conducted by noted ring announcer Jimmy Lennon Jr. Montiel's "Executive" Lopez, Mexican legend Marco Antonio Barrera, Antonio Margarito, Jorge Arce and Christian Mijares.

After nursing for the past two days to make the weight, Donaire told the Inquirer he's looking forward to winning and moving up to featherweight and challenging top featherweight champions including WBO champion Wilfredo Vazquez Jr.

Although the challenger, Donaire (20-1, 17KOs) has been installed as favorite by Las Vegas oddsmakers in their world title fight set at Mandalay Bay Resorts and Casino.

The 31-year-old Montiel, a world champion since 1999, holds a 44-2-1 card with 34 knockouts.

A group of flag waving Filipinos marched shouts and boos with an equally noisy band of Mexicans during the weigh in and Donaire later said the Philippine-Mexican rivalry "is good news for boxing."

"Me and Montiel are good friends but in the ring we bring out the best because we are proud of who we are and its healthy for boxing and brings the people to watch. Internationally the Mexicans are our biggest rivals," he said.

After the weigh-in, Donaire and his entourage which included his wife Rachael enjoyed a balanced meal of pasta and chicken.

"I am ready as ever," said Donaire, a former World Boxing Organization champion.

"He wants to knock me out and I want to knock him out. In a good equation of a good fight. I will definitely have fun. I am not underestimating him but this is going to be another good day."

Donaire, who is enjoying a 24-win streak, is ranked the world's No. 5 pound-for-pound fighter, while Montiel is rated No. 7.

The pound-for-pound king, of course, is Filipino-ring icon Manny Pacquiao.

The Donaire-Montiel bout will be aired by ABS-CBN Sports starting at 10:15 a.m. on ABS-CBN Channel 2.

Another Filipino hopeful, light middleweight Mark Jason Melligen, will fatight with Mexican Gabriel Martinez in one of the supporting bouts.

The 24-year-old Melligen is coming off a four win run.

'It's an even fight, Montiel hits like Pacquiao'

By Recah Trinidad

NOBODY, A TRAINER USED TO SAYS ON IT, a martial ain in the unorthodox rules of boxing, but the objective call on the eve of the Fernando Montiel-Nonito Donaire Jr. world featherweight fight is that both combatants have equal chances of winning.

There, indeed, is practically no possibility of the bout ending in a draw.

Although Montiel had been tagged as underdog early, mainly due to Donaire's superiority in height and total skills, an overall assessment seven several championship experience gave Montiel seven-to-three advantage.

Donaire could start strong and control the early rounds with brilliant, selective punching.

But Montiel, who has been through greater tests and bigger bouts, is also capable of turning the tide with sharp-learned skills and, maybe, a killer shot suddenly or later in the fight.

Here at home, where there's scant knowledge of Montiel's measuring worth, there's an overwhelming vote for a Donaire win, either by points or stoppage.

But the eminent Harold Lederman, given his experience and objectivity, says oddsmakers have obviously underestimated the Mexican world champion.

Lederman says Montiel can punch like a welterweight (Manny Pacquiao).

"Certainly the best puncher in all lighter divisions, he could take you out with one shot," Lederman tells Dennis Guillotino of Viasatsports.com.

"But Donaire is an unbelievable technical fighter," Lederman quickly adds.

Lederman did not say it but it has become clear Donaire must surpass himself—pose it all out, survive body bombardment, and score with stopping impact blows.

The championship promises to be the biggest and toughest for Montiel, who has never been stopped in all 75 championship outings.

But it will nonetheless be daunting for Donaire, successful in all four championship bouts (all won by knockout), because the Filipino Flash knows he'll has more men on comfortable bodyguard matches like Montiel, who thrives in no holds barred combat.

If at all, the only tangible edge Donaire has on the eve of the championship is the bigger purse.

He gets $550,000 against the $220,000 paycheck due Montiel, the reigning world's champ.

COMMENTARY

JFA plays host to Azkals' AFC Challenge Cup training

By Cedrik F. Tupas

THE JAPAN Football Association has agreed to host a week-long training camp for the Philippine national team, which is preparing for the second leg of the AFC Challenge Cup qualifier against Mongolia next month.

Philippine Football Federation president Mariano "Nonong" Araneta said yesterday in an interview call to the business from Jakarta that the Azkals will be allowed to train in the JFA facility in Nakadaira from March 6 to 12.

The Azkals will play the Mongolians on March 15, in expected sub-zero temperatures in Ulan Bator. The team is actually starting its building for the second leg today in Dagupan City where it will be undergoing a week-long camp.

For the second leg, the Azkals only need to protect their two-goal cushion they earned during the first match at the Rizal Memorial Stadium in December 2010.

Mongolia can handle only the Azkals with at least a 3-nil victory.

Azkals team manager Dan Palami welcomed the JFA's response, saying the camp will help the team adjust to the conditions in Mongolia.

But Palami also expressed concerns that if the Filipinos make it to the group stage—which has been moved from Bangladesh to Myanmar from March 29 to 31—the weather might also cake its toll on the players.

"This will be very difficult since the players might play in extreme weather conditions in a week, that's why we really need to prepare," said Palami, who was also the secretary of Presidential Assistant during the Sportswriters Association of Cebu annual awards gala yesterday.

But more than the extreme weather, Palami said "complacency will be their biggest enemy in Mongolia."

"That's why I have coach (Dan Michael) Weiss to ensure that we train as if we're 2-nil down rather than 2-nil up," Palami said.

The PFF actually requested in May gala accompany to hold a training camp in Ulan Bator, but Araneta said their request was turned down, leaving the federation with no recourse but to look for another venue.

Meanwhile, the Azkals have been stocked straight to the group stage of the AFF Suzuki Cup in 2012 for the first time, owing to their semifinal finish in last year's tournament, Araneta said.

The Philippines and Myanmar were actually tied with 12 points each based on the records the past two stagings of the region's most prestigious football tournament.

But the Azkals earned their ticket because of their semifinal appearance, which sparked renewed interest in the sport in the country.

Araneta said Thailand and Malaysia will host the tournament next year.

The Azkals ruled the Philippines will fail to host the tournament in 2014 and he has asked the tournament's marketing arm, World Sport Group, to provide the logistical needs to host the biennial event.

Meanwhile, midfielder Jason de Jong has reportedly signed with Indonesian Super League-squad Sriwaya FC.

Davis Cup tie live on TV5

By Marc Anthony Reyes

THE PHILIPPINES-JAPAN Asia Oceania Davis Cup tie in Cebu will be televised live.

Cebuana Lhuillier Philippines Davis Cup administrator Sandy Villanueva yesterday announced that the matches set on March 2 to 4 will be carried live by TV5 following an agreement with network official Raul Anlacan.

"It is one of the many firsts in this tie, we hope to ride on the public's interest to draw more support for the Philippine team," said Villanueva.

The tie is set on a newly built shell-clay court with a retractable roof inside Plantation Bay Spa and Resort in Lapu Lapu City.

Matches will start at 10 a.m. on March 2 and March 4, and 1 p.m. on March 3.

Philippine team captain Cecil Mamiit arrived yesterday morning from the United States and quickly buckled down to work at the Philippine Columbian Association tennis courts.

Villanueva said Mamiit, Treat Huey, Eliot Adams and Johnny Arcilla will face Lapu Lapu City on Monday to begin training together and get more familiar.

Huey is currently competing in Morocco where he's in partnership with Italian Simone Vagnozzi reached the semifinals of the 9th Men's Challenger.

Huey and Vagnozzi dismissed Lorenzo Gobbi of Algeria and Leonardo Tavares of Portugal, 3-6, 6-2, 10-6, to advance against Italians Matteo Trancredi and Matteo Viola.

MAMIIT

HUEY

70s racing star gets Hall of Fame nod

RACING LEGEND Pa Beng Tin will be installed into the Hall of Fame in the Cagayan Valley Wheel Foundation stages its 6th Annual Golden Wheel Awards Night on Feb. 26 at Pagear Theater in Tuguegarao City.

He was to claim in the '70s prominent color and excitement in the Philippine motorsports scene, earning Ye the worthy choice as fourth recipient of the award.

Enshrined in the Hall of Fame were the late Rodolfo Ramirez in 2008, Dante Silverio in 2009 and Ruben Inumerable last year.

Pa's racing dreams started with the Vulcan Automotive 20 vision in Pace, Manila, where his interest for things propelled by engines—from four wheels, motorcycles and even airplanes—began. It was his brother James, then a top gun drag racer, who provided the inspiration to get into racing.

Financial trouble, determination, sheer enthusiasm and love for the sport steered Ye's rise to fame as he prevailed in the Epic rivalry between Pachelo Ramirez and rival great driver Arthur Tuano in circuit racing.

Tabuena to grace JGFP rites at Riviera

TABUENA

FOR ALL its big contributions to the development of junior golf talents, the Riviera Sports Club in Silang, Cavite, deserves a name better than a tournament venue. It is a home.

On Feb. 26, the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines unveils the JGF Classic II and F-11 fitting tournament to be geared by top junior golfers led by Asian Games silver medalist Miguel Tabuena.

"The Riviera Sports Club is a home where junior golfers build their big dreams and in putting the number, everybody will be reminded of that," said JGFP president Luigi Tabuena, who is expected to be joined by the rest of the JGFP board of directors in the tournament occasion.

Riviera vice chair Lina Lorenzana has been instrumental to support the JGC.

For more than a decade now, the Riviera Sports Club has provided its 9-hole pitch and putt facilities to accommodate the various year-round tournaments for the youngest age group of the JGFP the Class E (ages 7 and 8) and Class F (9 and under).

Through their training at JGC, Tabuenas and the likes of Lyca Marie Rodriguez, Dottie Ardina, Wilen Serpent, Adam Gatlin, Migay Yee, Ali Ramos, Rupert Zaragosa, Princess Espend, Carlos Philippe Velasco and Mia Legaspi have produced countless victories abroad.

"It was a no-brainer pound in the JGFP program than Tabuenas parents of the silver medal in the Guangzhou Asian Games last December. Tabuena's 21st place showing in the Asian tour qualifying school makes him eligible to be a surprise this year.

"He (Miguel) has become a role model for the junior golfers and we want him to take the lead in promoting the JGC as a breeding ground of champions," said Josh Imperial, executive director of JGFP.

RUN PARTNERS Michael Gutiers of Brandsing Corp. (left) and Globe president and CEO Ernest Cu seal the agreement making Globe and Brandsing Corp. partners for the Globe Run for Home 2011, aimed at the Bonifacio Global City on March 27. Online registration begins on Feb. 21. For details, visit globe.com.ph/run.

SCORE TALLY

COMPLETE NBA RESULTS

East-Celebrity 49, West-Celebrity 54; Rookies 148, Sophomores 149

Kobe takes on all comers at home

WASHINGTON rookies John Wall hangs on to Gerrie after a dunk. Wall had a record 33 assists in the Rookies-Sophomores match. AP

LOS ANGELES—For one celebrity-soaked weekend in Hollywood, the NBA's two biggest competitions of stars are teaming up to see if they can take down Kobe Bryant in the NBA All-Star game.

The Boston Celtics and Miami Heat have a combined seven players on the East team for Sunday night's game at Staples Center, including Dwyane Wade, LeBron James, Paul Pierce and Kevin Garnett. But playing at home, Bryant, the Los Angeles Lakers five-time NBA championship winner, will have the crowd behind him and the rest of the West team.

"Oh, people in LA don't like us too much," said the Heat's Chris Bosh, playing on the East squad. "We'll get booed. It's OK, though. It's only the All-Star game."

The annual contest pits the best players in the NBA's Eastern Conference against the best players in the Western Conference, with the starters selected by fans in a vote and the reserves chosen by coaches from each division.

The East won last year's game-by a 141-139. The 2006 biggest scorer ever(167 total to equal to the city that pump much increased modern celebrity-to-day for crowds and that also includes gimmicky games and contests.

"It's great for the game," Wade said. "This is our showcase weekend, and especially having it out here in LA, it really brings the All-Star Land of feeling to it."

Much of the NBA's allure is in its future, stings and revival has fizzled in recent years. In due to the teams are back with stars in Boston, Miami and Los Angeles.

For the All-Star game, Wade, James and Bosh will form an unusual alliance with their rivals on the Celtics—Pierce, Garnett, Ray Allen and Rajon Rondo. Will Allstars also sending stars All-Stars, just six teams are represented on the East squad.

"We'll be rivals once again when we walk out of here," James said. "But for right now, we're trying to win for everybody."

The West team will be led by Bryant, a 13-time All-Star player who will become the first athlete to play for Staples and feel in the smooth outside Hollywood's famous Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Saturday.

"It seems like it was yesterday that I was on the (Madison Square) Garden for my first one," Bryant said. "It's pretty surreal. It's surreal that playing on All-Star game. And to feel a standard of Lakers for many working."

Bryant is still the basketball king of Los Angeles, but his likely later resides just down the hallway at Staples Center—about Griffin of the Los Angeles Clippers.

Griffin is the first player since Yao Ming in 2003 to be named an All-Star in his first year playing in the league. Griffin also plans to take part in Saturday's dunk contest. AP

Eala steps down from SBP post

By Joey Marasco

MOLLY EALA has stepped down as executive director of the Samahang Basketbol ng Pilipinas "to venture to the corporate world where new opportunities have seemed to have opened up to me."

Eala formally made the announcement yesterday, a few days after wondering his resignation to SBP vice chair Ricky Vargas.

"I leave confident that the SBP is now stable, progressive and unified enough to meet the challenges of the future with very strong basketball foundations in place," said Eala, whose resignation takes effect after a 30-day transition period.

A former commissioner of the Philippine Basketball Association, Eala will leave the country's governing body for basketball with a lot of accomplishments highlighted by a sustainable program for the national team.

"Rob joined the SBP during its most difficult years and was able to see through successfully the return of the Philippines to international basketball as a member in good standing of Fiba," said Vargas.

"While we understand the reasons behind his motivation to move on, we have asked him to stay on as a member of the SBP board and serve out his term of office," said Vargas.

Eala was installed executive director during the Tony Siaopo era on Feb. 3 2007 when SBP Chairman Jose Mari Marcy 'Chavit' Pangilinan was elected president.

The ceremony general Butch Bonnevie at resident the Congress to announce the lifting of the country's suspension imposed in 2005 following the suspension by the Philippine Olympic Committee of the Basketball Association.

Smart Sports head Butch Cargoso said the SBP has yet to appoint a replacement but an interim source disclosed that PBC commissioner Chito Cargoso is under the short list.

Wall rewrites record as Rookies trip Sophomores

LOS ANGELES—John Wall had a record 32 assists and picked up the MVP award while leading the Rookies to a 149-148 win over the Sophomores in the Rookies-Sophomores game at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, California.

Washington Wizards' Wall was supported by Minnesota Timberwolves Derrick Cousins, who finished with 30 points and 14 rebounds for the first time players who were facing a rescheduled group of NBA superstars.

"We were trying to work together," Cousins said of Wall. "He wanted to break the assist record, and I wanted to be MVP."

Wall, a first-round pick of Washington, surpassed Chris Paul's previous rookie challenge record of 27 assists in 2007.

"He was the one I praised," Minnesota Wesley Johnson said of Wall.

Wall's favorite target Paisley of Staples Center seven was Cousins. But Wall also connected several times with Blake Griffin at the side of the basket while the Los Angeles Clippers star able to finish off with some impressive two-handed dunks.

"I didn't get to go to practice today, so that was all on the fly," said Griffin. "(Wall) is a great passer, so he made it easy for me." AFP

Xavier forges Tiong Lian decider via rout of Hope

XAVIER SCHOOL smothered Hope Christian High School, 104-76, and have a rubber match in the Finals of Metro Manila Tiong Lian Basketball Association Finals Friday at the Ortanez Kat Shek College gym.

With Jesse Tiong, defensive whiz Angelo Perugrinelang and Kyler Lee at the helm, the Athletic Maldivian opened up with a 14-0 run, which set the tone for the Hope Christian Eagles' to force 2 of their best-of-three title series.

Game 3 will be held on Tuesday with Xavier gunning for a record fourth straight title while Hope Christian, which won Game 1, 79-62, targets its first championship in 10 years.

Inspired after winning the MVP award, Tiong finished with 37 points, 10 rebounds, five assists and five steals—another of circle to win the Finals Player of the Game award. He also had five blocked shots.

Meanwhile, Xavier's Aldrich Tee and St. Jude Catholic School's Jolliard Co managed to MVP winners in the supreme and girls' division, respectively, of the event hosted by PC-TEL Fiesta Homes, Schick, Greenies, Promo, Swiss-C, Kamiss, PO-Hot, Modess, Healthy-Options, Bora & Nivea, Bandaguzon, ABC Computer, Converse, Gold's Gym and Mercurio.

While Tiong, Kyler Lee and Bryan Tee traded on the offensive end, Peregrinelang made life miserable for Hope top gunner Jimmy Gonzales in the fourth-two quarters.

THE RIGHT WAY Jr. NBA coach Frank Lopez demonstrates drills for young hoopsters during Jr. NBA Philippines Clinic. The popular basketball program was launched recently at the Trustmark Sports Center at Pasig City with NBA legend AC Green scheduled to fly in and also participate. Green will also handle drills and challenges at the National Training Camp in April. Spalding is the official equipment supplier of the basketball event.

RACING TIPS

By TOP CHOICE
At Santa Ana Park

Manotoc stars as Canlubang seniors pull away

By Manuel R. Castillo

MANUEL PUNTOL, BUKIDNON—On target the whole round, Tommy Manotoc on Saturday shot a tournament-low 2-under 70 for 36 points as Del Monte beat to cup a mighty charge that lifted Canlubang on the verge of outscoring Lisuba as Seniors Champion of the Philippines Golfmasters Invitational.

Manotoc, who will take a shot at a third individual championship by playing at Pueblo de Oro at Cagayan de Oro on Sunday, had three birdies against a bogey as the Sugar Barons assembled a day-best 134 to build an 11-point lead over Lisuba after three rounds.

The Tarsers, beaten to Negros last year when Manotoc fell in his one-on-one duel on the final day with Francis Gaston at Manila, jacked up an overnight four-point edge after Tony Chiowe added 32 and Bing Reyes contributed 36 for the Laguna squad with three rounds remaining in the event.

Lisuba fell behind with a 54 hole tally of 449 after scoring up with 147 for the day (an 81 by Pepot Bigg and the couple of 66 from Bong Sison and Mayday Marcelito.

Philippine Sports Commission chair Richie Garcia, who had a 100-at Pueblo de Oro in the first round, failed to count with a poor 41 game effort.

Taking advantage of the Mt. clone and, place title, the 61-year-old Manotoc fired at the pins all day shooting a two-gun birdie on No. 14 before picking up another on the next.

And he finished in an upbeat mood despite missing at least five par-length putts for birdies.

"It looks really good," Manotoc, who has been playing superbly with a new set of custom-fitted Ping clubs, said of the 11-point lead. "But you know golf, it's never over until it's over."

No stranger to the history of Senior Interclub play has ever less than big a margin in the final round.

But Lisuba is not giving up hope, especially with Gaston and Iggy Clavecilla coming out in the final day.

"It's that good," Clavecilla said of Manotoc. "He have two chances—skin and none."

"But needless to say, we will still fight hard," added Clavecilla, who sat out the third round after shooting 55 points on Friday to help Lisuba come within four.

The excitement running in the Champ-ionship fight now belonged to the Sweaters Division where Manila Golf held a precarious one-point edge over Camp

PSC chair Richie Garcia (left) and Alex Prieto share a light moment during the 54th PAL Interclub Golf Tournament senior division.

John Hay and Cebu Country Club with scores 2nd Del Monte just five points back.

Marked Sweaters CW Espiritu scored 35 points and Joey Co-Unjieng had 46 to make up the bulk of Manila Golf's 139 for 426 overall. Mike Prieto's 43 was the best score that counted for Del Monte.

John Hay slipped out of the lead after a full-par 125 and Cebu Country Club put itself in the mix with a strong 140 for 426, the it was Del Monte which made the biggest move by posting 151 after a 10 from Nonoy Dalla points for 438.

Sportsmongs came up with 121 and eventually put away the Friendship Division crown by soaring to a 16 point advantage over PR Ata HPG.

More detailed trial results on the tournament is available on the PAL Interclub webpage at www.pallmanclub.com.

Que two shots off at 9-under

RIVIERA, Calif.—Angelo Que finished three times on the back nine to shoot a 4-under par 68 that kept him in a tie for ninth place with most of the contenders still to finish their round Saturday in the weather-interrupted Pacific Masters.

Que, who had rookie rounds of 71-68, stood at nine-under overall, two strokes behind leader Robert Coles of England, who was at 11-under after his 136th.

SSP Chowrasia of England was at 10-under after a 67 with Stds Schwieger and Jujjar Singh of India also at 10-under on the 17th.

Antonio Lascuña finished with a 74 and was at even par 216 with Hans Peasy at 1-under overall on the 17th.

Meanwhile, Filipino star Frankie Minoza struggled with a 74 and was 10 shots behind co-leaders Ross Cochran and Brett Izard longer to the first round of the championship Tour's ACE Group Classic in Naples, Florida.

La Salle golf stakes Lancer

A BMAC-rated 2011 Mitsubishi Lancer GX 2.0 GLS a Club Car golf set and cash will be the top-in-one prize for the 8th Br. Benedict Golf Cup slated Feb. 28 at the Forest Hills Golf & Country Club in Antipolo City.

Site of the hole-in-one prize will be raffled off during the awarding ceremonies, while La Salle 100 Years commemorative golf balls and ball markers, Banana Boat products, 100 Plus and other giveaways will be given away.

Entry fee is P2,750 for tournamentners and P1,500 for Forest Hill members. To register, contact 6258 458, 6258 012 or visit www.dlsaa.com. Deadline for registration and payments is Feb. 23.

Slammers take ABL title from Patriots

Baguion, Larong key shocker

By Jeannie W. Pape

THE FILIPINOS shone again, but they did it this time with the Ulang Hoodoo4 Mantanero.

Filipino-imports Ronjon Baguion and Ardy Larong ignited Thailand's second-half rally as the Slammers downed the AirAsia Philippine Patriots, 75-68, yesterday to capture the AirAsia Asean Basketball League championship.

"The Slammers completed a 2-0 sweep of the Patriots in the best-of-three series with Jason Dixon and Chris Exeter also making key baskets in Thailand's comeback from a 14-point deficit, 36-50, in the second half.

"It's just really all work, I have a lot of respect for the Patriots," said Baguion after the Slammers wrapped up the series on the road in Game 2 at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City.

"It was a physical game, there were no easy baskets. It's just I made sure to lead the team, to keep everyone in control."

Baguion and Dixon

PAGLABAN Baguion (front) of the Slammers brings home another ring after playing a key role for the Pinoys last year.

AUGUST SEBASTIAN

suited up for the Philippines last year and played key roles in the Smokies' title run in the inaugural season.

The top-seeded Slammers also had a FIL quire for a head coach, Ruba Morral, who steered Thailand to the title after finishing last place in the six-nation tournament last year.

"We anticipated their defensive adjustments," said Morral, who is based in Bangkok.

Baguion unloaded a game-high 19 points in the bar on a lamp that outlasted the Slammers' load, 71-66, with 56.1 seconds left.

Larong fired 15 markers, while Dixon had 13 points, 14 rebounds and three steals.

"We didn't play smart basketball, that's the bottom line," said Emerson coach Leroy Glass. "What happened was exactly the same as Game 1. The instructions was to bring the ball to the post, but we settled for jump shots."

Exeter dropped in 22 points as the Slammers outscored the Patriots, 20-16, in the fourth quarter.

Both Baguion and Dixon also starred in Game 1 where the Slammers staged a fourth-quarter rally for a 66-60 triumph last Sunday in Bangkok.

"I can't take the credit," said Dixon. "People sometimes forget about Ronjon. But I wouldn't have won this without him."

As in Game 1, Chris Newsmart was held scoreless in the third period before finishing with 16 points and 16 rebounds for the Patriots.

Jennifer Fernandez, who shot 10-markers, rounded up with Marites Thaller in the third-quarter to pace the Patriots that 58-50 edge.

Box scores
SLAMMERS 75 - Baguion 12, Larong 15, Dixon 13, Exeter 22, Lamsam 1, Salinas, Pinkaewkaset 2, Lertkiat 1
PHILIPPINES 68 - Ivanescu 16, Fernandez 14, Thaller 12, Tolentino 7, Mercado 7, Jarin 5, Alcantara 5, Sabuguing 3, Mc Cann 0
Quarters: 16-18, 36-32, 45-42, 75-68

Eala resignation draws varied reactions

IT'S NOT difficult to imagine how people reacted when word got around this weekend that Ilocos Sur had officially ceased to be executive director of the Gumabang Basketball ng Pilipinas or GBP.

After all, this report had many—to—thinking at for back as several months ago and it was beginning to look like the talks were going nowhere.

Although the buzz was in the highest dividends some days ago, I completely ignored the din. Knowing all too well that despite the talks, nothing was happening. Nada appeared to be in self-corrected in the GBP.

Last year there were even talks that Neil's replacement had been uncovered down between former PBA commissioner Rotary Barrios and newly installed PSC commissioner Chito Loyzaga.

The final choice was never divulged. Again the reports fizzled out when nothing happened. Barrios took a vacation in New York after he retired as PBA commissioner, while Loyzaga returned on his task as PSC commissioner.

* * *

Yesterday, the reports were finally confirmed via a statement

IN HUDDLE

Beth Celis

issued by Ricky Vargas, GBP vice chair and Majordad CEO.

In his issued statement, Ricky talked of their involvement ending some days ago, Eala made known his desire to resign from his GBP post.

The reason Eala gave was that he would "pursue a career in the corporate world."

He said that while the GBP understands the reasons behind Eala's motivations is more on, "we have asked him to stay on as a member of the GBP board and serve out his term of office. At the same time, we will continue his efforts in building international relationship with Iris. We wish him all the best."

* * *

Sometimes, you have to be careful what you wish for.

After I got the statement, I asked Stabi's predecessor Butz Gregorio if GBP had some prospective replacements in mind. I was expecting him to blurt the names of Loyzaga and Barrios, but Butz demurred.

"Wala pang names, Tim, pag-isipan pa nyan," he said.

The other night, during the birthday bash of Stabi's Ace cager James Yap, I got it from good source that Neil was moving on to San Miguel Corp.

No one could tell for sure the exact position he would be holding.

A former PBA executive said he would head SMC's basketball operations, a position currently held by Robert Non, but it was also my informant who asked this follow-up question: "Kanino siya uulo-ulo?"

Some months ago, SMC president and CEO Ramon S. Ang paid a visit to the PSA editorial offices. I remember that PSA assistant sports editor Francis Ochoa had interviewed the jovial business titan and had asked him if Neil was joining his company.

Mr. Ang said that even if he takes Neil in, no one among the present SMC sports staff will lose his job.

* * *

"I answer for the life of my underwear why Jun Miguel took him in," said a PBA governor. Cost to the SMC gamyot. "I guess he has nine lives."

A scribe with whom Eala had an altercation versus: "It will be a fresh start for #9 basketball. I hope the highest ranks get someone who will put players' interests and exposure above his own."

Guam's coach, Tony Gonzaga, meanwhile, hastened to react on the latest developments.

Stabi-go, it might be cruel to comment on a man's misfortune. The GBP people know what's best for them."

Neil being out of the SBP could mean only one thing for Alvarez enforcers Eddy Orcullo, his handiest cattle. "There is a God!"

SBP secretary general Elizabeth Lim, who has often crossed paths—and swords—with Eala during the formation of the SBP, was surprisingly indifferent. "He's no big loss to the SBP, which has not improved one performance from the first days."

Scoop president Eddie Alvero echoed the same sentiment. "Almost four years na ang SBP wala pa ring improvement sa performance. Sayo pluto sa Asian Games, lowest record, seventh in Fiba Asia two years ago, ninth in Fiba Asia. So, what else is new?"

Isabela hosts SCUAA

THE 2011 State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association (SCUAA) National Olympiad kicks off tomorrow at the Michaela Simpson Sports Complex in Ilagan, Isabela.

Close to 5,000 athletes and officials from 109 state universities and colleges in 16 regions all over the country are taking part in the week-long competition supervised by the Philippine Association of State Universities and Colleges (PASUC) and hosted by the provincial government of Isabela.

Isabela Gov. Faustino "Bojie" Dy III will welcome the participants who will compete in 14 sporting events.

The Search for the Miss SCUAA 2011 will also be held to determine the country's representative to the coming Miss University World in Seoul.

"The event provides an opportunity for the varsity athletes to participate in sports competition and enable the outstanding athletes to show their skills and talents," said PASUC president Dr. Lucio E. Tacbas.

LGBA DERBIES The cock and crop derbies for 2011 of the 150-member Luzon Gamecock Breeders Association (LGBA) will be supported by Suite Executive Foods. Here LGBA president Bowel Pitcs, Boy Chua, Abbey Enriquez, Dr. Gil Nicolas, Gerry Escalona and lawyer Maria Antonia Bernaldez at the agreement recently with Suite executives Paula Alabaza and Charina del Mundo at Blue Ridge in Quezon City.

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Aplus METRO
Editor Alexander S. Lifunday

Makati condo owner hit on 'dirty' water

DENR orders stop to discharge of oil-stained water in city's drainage

By Tina G. Santos

FOR ALLEGEDLY failing to comply with environmental laws, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources has ordered the management of the West Tower Condominium in Bangkal, Makati City, to stop discharging oil-contaminated water into the city's drainage system.

Regional Director Robert Sheen of DENR Environmental Management Bureau on Friday served the building management with a cease and desist order in the operations of the wastewater treatment facility of Benguet Industries Inc. (BII).

The building management had contracted BII supposedly to recover, treat and discharge water contaminated with oil that has continuously been seeping into their basement.

The management immediately complied with the order.

According to the three-page order of the DENR-EMB, the special wastewater discharge permit issued to the building for the operation of the facility had expired and that it had failed to pass the DENR parameters under the Revised Effluent Regulations of 1990.

Waste water recovered from the basement are being discharged in the drainage system after passing through the wastewater treatment facility.

"Water sampling tests and monitoring are regularly conducted but DENR inspectors apparently found out that in some instances, the water being discharged at the sewage system did not conform with their standards," said Barangay Bangkal Councilor Rolland Sagalongos.

The DENR-EMB order listed that there was a recent application for another renewal of Special Wastewater Discharge Permit for water contaminated with oil. It added that in a meeting held last Jan. 21, the condominium management committed in writing to instruct BII to continue/ maintain the treatment facility to ensure adherence to effluent standard.

"Up until mid-this date, however, no improvement on the facility had been done nor submitted any proposal in attaining an effluent quality that would conform with DENR standards," the order said.

It added that the Lopez-owned First Philippine Industrial Corp. (FPIC), which earlier admitted that the oil leak was traced to its pipeline, was willing to take over the activities being undertaken by BII if it will be officially ousted soon as them.

Sheen said the proposal of FPIC to take over the management of hauling and treatment of the contaminated water is warranted since it assumed responsibility over the pipeline leak.

The pipeline, part of which runs along Ortigas Highway just a few meters away from the condominium building, transports about 60 percent of Shell Pilipinas Corp.'s fuel needs from a refinery in Batangas to the Pandacan oil depot in Manila.

To date, it has remained closed while FPIC conducted rehabilitation and remediation works in the oil leak affected area.

Sought for comment, Ahmed Chenatova, a unit owner at West Tower, said they are open to the idea of turning over to FPIC the handling and treatment of contaminated water recovered from the condominium basement.

MAKATI, A2a

Antilittering 'enforcers' roam Marikina streets

By Kristine Felisse Mangunay

BOSTOK, 10 strikes.

Officers, also known as "enforcers," will soon ply the streets of Marikina City and charge you for that inadvertently you threw while on your way to the office, or that candy wrapper you discreetly slipped inside that open manhole.

Reported to maintain violators of the Anti-Littering Code of Marikina, the enforcers form part of the local government's efforts to "instill discipline" in residents and visitors alike, especially when proper waste disposal is concerned.

"The selected personnel will undergo a seminar and orientation under my office," City Environmental Management Office chief Gloria Ramentereza said in a statement.

To ensure that provisions of the code are effectively implemented, the deployed personnel will be given an incentive for every person they catch littering on the streets. They will automatically receive 25 percent of the penalty fee of P500, or P125 per violation.

But to one way of helping the enforcers as well, Ramentereza said.

The deployment of antilittering personnel in the city one of the hundred 66 others Tropical Storm "Ondoy" struck in 2009, comes on the heels of a statement issued by Marcoguitan Manila Development Authority Chair Francis Tolentino urging for a stricter implementation of the Anti-Littering Law.

Passed in 1999, the law mandates people who dump garbage that clogs waterways and places all business establishments responsible for the cleanliness of their immediate surroundings.

Under the law, corresponding fines of P500 to P1,500 are imposed on violators. Those who cannot afford to pay the fines will render community service.

DAMAGE CONTROL WORK

Personnel of the Light Rail Transit Authority (LRTA) cover a crane Saturday to put back on track the two trains that collided on Friday morning. No one was hurt in the accident which investigators claim could have been caused by technical malfunction.

Raps filed vs suspect in BIR exec's slay

By Kristine Felisse Mangunay

MURDER charges were filed yesterday against the owner of the motorcycle used in the killing of a Bureau of Internal Revenue district officer three days ago in Antipolo City.

Senior Supt. Manuel Pineda, Rizal police director, said the charges were filed against Andy Castito Jr., with the city prosecutor's office for his alleged cover-up of and participation in the killing of Mayerlano Sap, revenue officer of Revenue No. 45.

Sap's district covers the so-called SMART area, or San Mateo, Marikina, Antipolo and Teresa in Rizal province.

The Antipolo police and the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-Rizal, which have been placed in charge of the case, invited Castito for questioning Thursday after the ownership of the Kawasaki motorcycle, through its chassis number, was traced to him.

Chief Insp. Rony Endero, CIDG-Rizal field officer, said that when told that his motorcycle figured in the murder of a BIR official, Castito claimed that the motorcycle had been stolen around 7 a.m. somewhere in Marikina City on Thursday.

"It's prove his point, he said that he filed an incident report in Marikina," Endero said.

Upon verification with the Marikina City police, investigators found that a report was indeed filed by Castito on Thursday but only around 10:30 a.m., or about two hours after Sap was shot dead.

The filing of the incident report was considered to that effect by Senior Supt. Romeo Magno, Marikina chief of police.

"We gave due inconsistencies in his statements as we were ahead with the interior grilling until he finally confessed," Endero said.

By Endero's account, Castito told investigators that his motorcycle was stolen by two armed men who instructed him to file the incident report.

Castito is now under police custody. A police manhunt continues for the arrest of the alleged gunmen and the still unidentified cohort, or alias Tony.

WEEKEND PROTEST

Masbate protesters display placards in front of soldiers during a rally held Saturday by relatives of missing leftists along Edsa in Quezon City fronting Camps Crame and Aguinaldo. The protest coincided with the fourth year disappearance of Lee Velasco, a peace talks consultant of the communist movement.

Manila cops set up security preparations for Edsa rites

By Jeannette I.Andrade

THE MANILA Police District (MPD) has set up security preparations to thwart protesters' possible attempts to hold mass actions to coincide with Manila's celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Edsa People Power I revolt.

MPD deputy director for operations Senior Supt. Fidel Pasudoc said that some 900 police personnel and an augmentation force from the National Capital Region Police Office (NCRPO) will be deployed around the venue of the Feb. 25 celebration in Manila, at the corner of Padre Burgos Avenue and Roxas Boulevard.

Monuments of the late President Cory Aquino and her husband, former Sen. Benigno Aquino, are situated at the street corner. A statue of the late Manila Archbishop Jaime Cardinal Sin will also be unveiled on that day.

Apart from the 300 MPD personnel and NCRPO operatives, another 250 policemen will be dispatched to secure the immediate vicinity of the monuments.

The security preparations were laid out, Pasudoc explained, because of reports that activist groups plan to stage mass actions to coincide with the events.

Pasudoc stressed that some of the protesters would be allowed to go near the monuments on orders of Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim, whom he quoted as saying, "I want them (activists) to be blocked. It is also for the security of (President Aquino) who is expected to attend the ceremony."

The highlight of the city's Feb. 25 celebration will be the unveiling of a bronze monument of the late Cardinal Sin.

METROBRIEFS

Nat'l Rare Disease Week set

THE CEBU RTP will observe this week the 2nd National Rare Disease Week with the theme "Towards equal access to healthcare and social services for persons with rare disorders." The observance of the event every fourth week of February is provided under Presidential Proclamation No. 1580 signed in February 2010 by former President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo. The proclamation underlines the role of the state in promoting and protecting the right to health of the people, including the right of persons suffering from rare diseases to have access to timely information and adequate medical care. PP 1580 also underscores the urgent need to conduct a national information campaign to create awareness among health professionals on the needs and management of rare diseases and to instill awareness among the public about rare diseases.

Young man held for robbery

A 19-YEAR-OLD man wanted for allegedly robbing several students of a Makati high school last year was arrested by authorities Friday. Rodolfo Domingo Jr., of Masbate Street, Barangay Pinagkaisahan, Makati City, is facing four counts of robbery cases at the Makati regional trial court, said Senior Insp. Rodney Saquilayan, chief of the warrant section of the Makati Police. Domingo was nabbed at his house after the issuance of a warrant of arrest issued by Makati Judge Encarnacion Laja-Moya. Saquilayan said the suspect allegedly committed the robberies on several occasions between August and September last year, victimizing many students of Fort Bonifacio High School. Tina G. Santos

Rob suspect fished out of creek

THE BODY of a handcuffed suspected robber, who allegedly shot and wounded a policeman, was fished out Friday of a creek in Tondo, Manila. Police said the suspect, identified as John Rolano, 24, had two gunshot holes in the head and had been stabbed by village watchmen. They caught the body at PO3 Rolando Tolentino who had recently let loose the suspect in a hospital for checkup. But Rolano jumped off the vehicle on the way to the hospital and ran towards a bridge over a creek. Tolentino gave chase and caught up with Rolano when the latter entered the policeman for possession of the latter's gun. In the scuffle, the gun went off, hitting Rolano on the head and Tolentino on the foot. Rolano fell off the bridge and his body was fished out of the creek at around 9:30 a.m. Friday. Jeannette I. Andrade

Man who held family hostage surrenders

By Tina G. Santos

THE MAN who took hostage his family and household members for several hours inside their house in Sitio Hill, Subdivision in Las Piñas Friday afternoon surrendered to the authorities yesterday.

City police chief Senior Supt. Romulo Sapitula said Michi Lanchinguco, who requested to be called Ding from mental illness, surrendered with his hands bloodied apparently from self-inflicted wounds.

On Friday afternoon, Lanchinguco "refused to let go" his family and household members, prompting the police to deploy members of the Special Weapons and Tactics to the area.

But Sapitula downplayed the incident as a domestic problem, saying that there was no deadly weapon involved.

He said they were able to secure the hostages Friday night but stopped police men to look after Lanchinguco, who locked himself up inside his house.

Around 11 a.m. yesterday, however, he threw his arms on Lanchinguco's face through a window pane, destroying and breaking their windows' glasses.

At one point, Lanchinguco went out on the street wielding a bolo, but went back inside his house upon seeing the authorities.

He eventually agreed to surrender and was brought to the hospital for treatment of his wounds.

Makati condo owner hit on 'dirty' water

From page A-19

"What we just didn't like was that the PHC was asking us to write them a letter asking them to do it. Dapat sa kanila sila. Para naman kasing nanunulsulan sa pag-ginawa namin yun. We're the aggrieved party here. The contaminated water was all their fault in the first place," he said.

"We don't want to write them a letter not because of pride, it's just a matter of propriety," he added.

The DENR-EMB also ordered PHCI to submit a report of remedial works to be undertaken within five days to determine environmental compliance under existing laws.

"A clear and definite methods and facilities shall be integrated in this report as required for an appropriate treatment, evaluation and identification of environmental assessment," it added.

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INQUIRER

The WORLD

Editor Lawrence B. Casco

Libya's Gadhafi, Bahrain king battle to stay in power

MANAMA—Two of the Middle East's most entrenched rulers were battling to stay in power yesterday amid reports of dozens of protesters killed in Libya and an offer of talks by Bahrain's king being rebuffed.

Unrest has spread from Tunisia and Egypt to Bahrain, Libya, Yemen and Djibouti, presenting the United States with the dilemma of maintaining stability in the oil-rich region while upholding the right to demonstrate for democratic change.

Libya's security forces killed 35 people in the eastern city of Benghazi late on Friday, Human Rights Watch declared witnesses and hospital sources as saying, in the worst violence of Moammar Gadhafi's four decades in power.

Protests against Gadhafi's rule this week, inspired by the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, were met with relative crackdowns, but witnesses and the media have made it difficult to establish the full extent of the violence.

New York-based Human Rights Watch said the killings on Friday rank as 84 its estimate for the death toll over three days of protests—most of it focused in the restive region around Benghazi.

It said the shooting in the city, 1,000 km east of Tripoli, happened when security forces opened fire on people protesting after funeral processions for people killed in earlier violence. There has been no official word on the number of dead.

"We give out a call to all the doctors in Benghazi to come to the hospital and for everyone to give blood because I've never seen anything like this before," the group quoted a senior hospital official as saying. "Special forces who have a very strong allegiance to Gadhafi are still fighting desperately guns in control, it gets pressed and the people are fighting them armed to arms," said a resident of Benghazi identified as Abdurazzaq by the BBC.

BAHRAINI Shiite antigovernment protesters chant slogans in Manama, Bahrain, on Feb. 18. —

In Bahrain, a key US ally and home to the US Middle East fleet, the main Shiite opposition bloc has rejected a dialogue call from the king after the week's unrest in the island, a Shiite ex-lawmaker said on Saturday.

"We don't feel that there is a serious will for dialogue because the military is in the streets," Ibrahim Mattar, a member of the Wefaq bloc rebuilt quit parliament on Thursday, told Reuters.

Mattar said the authorities would have to "accept the concept of constitutional monarchy" and pull troops off the streets before any dialogue could begin.

"Then we can go for a temporary government of non-faces that would not include the current interior or defense ministers."

Bahrain's king offered a national dialogue with all parties on Friday to try to end the unrest which has cost six lives and hundreds of other casualties since Monday.

More than 60 people were in hospital on Saturday being treated for wounds sustained when Bahraini security forces fired on protesters as they headed to Pearl Square the previous day.

US President Barack Obama spoke with the king on Friday evening, condemning the violence and urging the government to show restraint. Obama said the stability of Bahrain, new to Saudi Arabia, depended upon respect for the rights of its people, according to the White House.

The government is led by its house Minister Mohammed bin Khalifa dynasty, but the majority Shi'ite population has long complained about what it sees as discrimination in access to state jobs, housing and healthcare, a charge the government denies.

The United States and top oil producer Saudi Arabia see Bahrain as a linear but work against neighboring Shiite regional power Iran.

Analysts say a key difference between Libya and Egypt is that Gadhafi has cut such to smooth over social problems.

Gadhafi is also suspected in much of the country, though less so in the Cyrenaica region around Benghazi.

"We are sure there is no national uprising," said Mohsen Brantaoui, a former opposition Libyan Islamist who is based in Britain. Reuters

Cell phone cameras become world's eyes and ears on protests

FOR SOME of the protesters facing Bahrain's heavily armed security forces in and around Pearl Square in Manama, the most powerful weapon against shotguns and tear gas has been the tiny camera inside their cell phones.

By uploading images of the week's violence in Manama, the capital, to websites like YouTube and eBay, and then sharing them on Facebook and Twitter, the protesters try to engage governments' attention and draw worldwide attention to their demands.

A month less than a decade ago, the cell phone camera has become a vital tool to document the government response to the unrest that has spread through the Middle East and North Africa.

Recognizing the power of such documentation, human rights groups have published guides and presented training on how to use cell phone cameras effectively.

"You finally have a video technology that can fit into the palm of one person's hand, and what the person can capture can easily be uploaded to the world," said James E. Katz, director of the Rutgers Center for Mobile Communication Studies. "This is the dagger at the throat of the aging old regimes that, through the manipulation of three old centralized networks," he said, "have been able to smother the public's voice."

In Tunisia, cell phones were used to capture video images of the first protests in mid-December, which helped spread unrest to other parts of the country. The uploaded images also prompted producers at Al-Jazeera, the satellite television network, to begin focusing on the revolt, which toppled the Tunisian government in mid-January and set the stage for the democracy protests in Egypt.

While built-in cameras have been commercially available in cell phones since the late 1990s, it was not until the tsunami that struck southeast Asia on Dec. 26, 2004, and the London subway bombings the following July that news organizations began to take seriously the idea of the copywriting of images and videos created and posted by nonprofessionals. Memorably, in June 2009, cell phone videos of the shooting death of a young woman in Tehran helped to bolster opposition rallied on YouTube, galvanizing the Iranian opposition and mobilizing around the world.

Now, news organizations regularly seek out, sift and publish such images. Another turning point was the Haiti earthquake, since phones can be easily altered by outsiders and old videos can resurface again, purporting to be new. YouTube is using Storyful, a news aggregation site, to help manage the crush of videos. Hundreds of videos that have been uploaded from the Middle East in recent weeks and to highlight notable ones on the CrisisCribs channel. REUTERS

HUSBAND

Swiss freeze assets tied to Mubarak, associates

INVESTIGATORS have discovered tens of millions of dollars in Swiss bank accounts belonging to the ousted Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, his family and five prominent associates, officials in Switzerland announced Friday. The officials said the accounts had been frozen, but declined to break down who controlled the vast sums.

"What has been blocked is funds in the area of several dozen million Swiss francs," said Adrian Gallenger, a spokesperson for the Swiss Foreign Ministry. "We are not specifying what their value is or whose money it is."

Gallenger said the search for funds would continue.

After Mubarak's resignation on Feb. 11, Swiss officials ordered all banks in the country to search for and freeze his assets and those of his family, four former ministers and a wealthy party member.

Egypt's new military-led government has asked countries across the Western and Arab world to freeze the assets of the four former ministers, the party member and their families, according to American officials. But it has not asked countries to freeze the assets of Mubarak and his relatives.

Switzerland is acting on its own against the Mubarak family's assets, under a new law that allows government officials to freeze accounts belonging to any former leader suspected of corruption. The law was enacted to change the country's reputation as a haven for illegally acquired money.

Egyptian opposition members said they feared that the country's military-led government would shield Mubarak, a former air force chief, and his relatives from investigation. A senior official of the National Association for Change, an opposition group led by Mohamed ElBaradei, the former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, called for an investigation into the Mubarak family and 200 other officials.

"We don't want to seize anybody from this regime," said the official, George Ishak. "Every Mubarak himself and his family to the people who are accused there."

The Mubarak associates whose assets are being sought are Gamal Mubarak, Rachid, a businessman and former minister of tourism; Ahmed el-Maghrabi, a former housing minister; Zahid Gouna, a former tourism minister; and Habib el-Adly, a former interior Minister. Ahmed Ezz, a steel tycoon and party member, is also a target.

On Thursday, an Egyptian prosecutor ordered that all but Rachid be detained pending trial for corruption. Rachid, currently in Dubai, denied any wrongdoing in a telephone interview. Ezz did so earlier this week on Al Jazeera television. The Mubarak family and the other three officials could not be reached for comment.

On Thursday the U.S. Treasury Department advised U.S. banks to monitor movements of funds by former senior Egyptian political figures that "would potentially represent misappropriated or diverted state assets, proceeds of bribery or other illegal payments." New York Times/Swiss News Service

In US, breast surgeries used to extensively

TOO MANY women with abnormal mammograms or other breast problems are undergoing surgical biopsies when they should be having needle biopsies, which are safer, less invasive and cheaper, new research shows.

A study in Florida found that 15 percent of the breast biopsies there from 2000 to 2008 were surgical. The rate should be 10 percent or less, according to medical guidelines.

The figures in the rest of the country are likely to be similar to Florida's, the researchers said, which would translate to more than 300,000 women a year having unnecessary surgery, at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars. Many of those women do not even know cancer. About 60 percent of breast biopsies are benign. For women who do have cancer, a surgical biopsy means two operations instead of one, and may make the cancer surgery more difficult than it would have been if a needle biopsy had been performed.

Dr. Stephen B. Grobmyer, the senior author of the Florida study, said he and his colleagues started their research because they kept seeing patients referred from other hospitals who had had surgical biopsies when a needle biopsy (also called open biopsies) when a needle should have been used.

"After a while you keep seeing this, you say something's going on here," said Grobmyer, who is director of the breast cancer program at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

The reason for the overuse of open biopsies is not known. Researchers say the problem may occur because not all doctors keep up with medical advances and guidelines. But they also say that some surgeons keep doing open biopsies because needle biopsies are usually performed by radiologists. The surgeon would have to refer the patient to a radiologist, and lose the biopsy fee.

A surgical biopsy requires an inclining incision, stitches and sometimes sedation or general anesthesia. It leaves a scar. A needle biopsy requires only numbing with a local anesthetic, uses a tiny incision and requires no stitches and carries less risk of infection and scarring.

If the abnormality in the breast is too small to be felt and has been detected by a mammogram or other imaging method, the needle biopsy uses one to be guided to the area by computer-imaging ultrasound or MRI—and will often have to be performed by a radiologist. If a lump can be felt, imaging is not needed to guide the needle, and a surgeon can perform it.

"Surgeons really have to let go of the pattern where they have an image abnormality," said Dr. I. Michael Leitman. "They are giving away a potential surgery that the standards require it." AP/WS

Russian official calls for political change

MOSCOW—Russia's powerful finance minister, Alexei L. Kudrin, said in a speech Friday that economic advantages in Russia were too often granted based on relationships with government officials, and warned that economic reforms would not be possible without political change.

It was an unusual criticism coming from a technocrat who has worked closely with Prime Minister Vladimir V. Putin for more than two decades. Kudrin is often credited with helping cushion Russia from the collapse of oil prices, and has repeatedly pushed for the country to diversify the economy away from oil and gas.

The speech, delivered at the Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum, comes amid intrigue over what path Russia will take after President Dmitry Medvedev's term ends in 2012. Though Russia's leadership has embraced the broad goal of "modernization," there are major differences over whether political liberalization is necessary.

Further, when Medvedev ousted deputy prime minister, weighed in on that question, saying the ousting elections should be "just and fair" and involve "all the leading political forces and representatives of society."

Kudrin did not say that only credible elections "will give the mandate of trust that is necessary" to undertake economic reforms," according to a transcript of the speech released by the Russian government late Friday. "If distrust develops, we will not be able to fully achieve our goals."

ST. PETERSBURG—Lumberjacks, a weathervane in the form of a ship found atop a spire, is silhouetted on the rising full moon. —

In a lengthy speech that touched on many aspects of the Russian economy, Kudrin repeated the third annual drop in foreign investment, down to $43 billion, or $149 billion from a high point of $227 billion. Investors also quoted Kudrin as giving a harsh assessment of some economic problems in Russia.

"There seem to be rules of the game, but there is room sure they are circumvented," he said, according to Reuters. The news agency also quoted him as saying "we have a very weak system of management, including in the government."

The official transcript released Friday night did not include those remarks, though it did include allusions to corruption in economic decisions.

"We have a situation where companies valuable are closer to the government and the state, than other private companies—that is, they use administrative support," he said, according to the official transcript. "Mergers, acquisitions, access to resources, are often decided in the offices of officials. We must fundamentally change this situation."

The Krasnoyarsk forum was the site of a memorable speech three years ago from Medvedev, then a candidate for the presidency, who opened by saying: "Freedom is better than non-freedom. These words are the quintessence of human existence." The president has delivered little substance in political change, however, and Kudrin's words sounded less like an endorsement of either Putin or Medvedev than an endorsement of the system they preside over.

The last time Kudrin ventured so publicly into the political realm was a year ago, when during a television interview he said he no longer associated himself with United Russia, the ruling party which Putin leads.

Boris I. Makarenko, an analyst with the Center for Political Technologies, said Putin and Medvedev had staked out distinct positions on whether political liberalization is necessary or convenient, with Medvedev arguing that the processes are interlinked. Kudrin's speech suggested that this argument was unresolved. Ist

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Business/Features Editor Margie Quiroga-Espino

Sunday BIZ

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Old, used batteries give life to learning centers /B3

Driftwood sustains artists, entrepreneurs

Ifugao artists find environment-friendly alternative to wood

By Maurice Malanes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—A woodcraft industry is sustaining both the Ifugao people's innate talent in recreating something out of wood and their entrepreneurial or business skills.

Known for their woodcarving skills, Ifugao can carve from wood almost anything they can visualize—from American bulldogs they see in Western movies and films and other animals whose images they come across in magazines or photographs.

But wood is getting harder to get as trees are being harvested faster than they are being replanted. So the creative Ifugao folk have resorted in recent years to an alternative—dried

DRIFTWOOD IKI

IGOROT moment: crafts

U.S.B. Agustin sits on her Magic Swan Bed made of sugar grass.

Landscape experts find place, profit in Baguio fest

PICTURESQUE landscape were set at a corner of Burnham Park.

By Maurice Malanes
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—A portion of this city's Burnham Park, host to 235 tent-covered business stalls, could have been just another "tiangge" or flea market.

But simply offering venues for merchants to peddle their goods is not Imelyn Dimson Bangayan Ji's idea of a "Market Renaissance," a feature of the now yearly Panagbenga [Baguio Flower Festival].

For the former Camp John Hay Development Corp. official, who conceived the Panagbenga in 1994, the aesthetic and ecological must be part of the business experience during Market Renaissance.

This, he says, is the idea behind incorporating a landscaping competition during the event.

As merchants (under their tents)—some of them aided by lighting personnel experience commercial jingles and ads—while buyers mill around the tent-covered stalls, the atmosphere at an area nearby is more contemplative and joyful.

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Vision: What's love got to do with it?

WHERE DOES vision come from? How does a leader develop a clear vision for the future?

At the simplest stages, the word "vision" may be somewhat misleading, portraying vision as a picture that we can see. The birthplace of vision isn't the mind's eye, but the heart. In the beginning, visionaries are guided by passion not sight. They must feel their way in the dark at first, and only through time do they gain a mental image of what the future could look like.

Vision is what you want to do in life, and only when you think should be done. I can think of a thousand noble causes, but only a select few resonate with my heart. Vision begins as a compelling cause or desire. The genesis of vision isn't purely an intellectual exercise; it involves monitoring your passions.

Passion generates vision, but I constantly do not recommend blindly following your heart. When developing a vision it's necessary to realistically assess your strengths, skills, and available opportunities.

For example, I may aspire to sing on Broadway, but if the sounds of my voice makes an audience cover their ears in pain, then it's time to focus on another area of passion. Desire alone usually is not sufficient to develop a vision. Yet, every vision does start with an emotional spark.

Passion births vision

Ability is not enough to sustain us to reach our personal. Opportunity alone will never get you to the top. Knowledge is a great asset, but comes up short helping us "be all that we can be." Even pairing together a good team is not sufficient. Passion is the difference-maker.

In my years of observing people, I have never seen an individual reach his potential without passion. Horst Schulze, former COO of the Ritz Carlton says "You can't do nothing unless it comes from your heart. Passion, caring, really looking to create excellence. If you don't care to say subs and go to work only to do passionless, then you can't do anybody correct. And it scares me—most people I see, by age 20, are retired... If you go to work only to fulfill the promises and fine tune then you are a machine. You have to bring passion, commitment and caring. Then you are a human being."

Without passion we stop dreaming and settle for mediocrity. Passion is the catalyst for vision in exchange for security and comfort.

One team of researchers followed a group of 1,500 MBAs over a period of 20 years. At the outset of the study, the participants were divided into two groups, Group A and Group B.

Group A, 83 percent of the sample, was composed of people who were continuing on a career path that they had chosen solely for the prospect of making money or were in order to do what they wanted later in life.

Group B, the other 17 percent of the sample, consisted of people who had chosen their career pathway that they would do what they wanted to do now and were not concerned about the money later.

The data showed some startling revelations:

• At the end of the 20-year period, 101 of the 1,500 had become millionaires.

• Of the millionaires, all but one—100 out of 101—were from Group B, the group that had chosen to pursue what they loved.

In summarizing the research for his book Getting Back Your Own Way, Scully Blotnick observed the following: "Financial ingredients had to be present if someone was going to become rich; they had to find their work absorbing. Involving. Enthralling." The person who's chosen passion over predictable earnings. They had a vision for life beyond material riches, and invariably they ended up generating the most wealth.

Conclusion

To birth a vision, begin by paying attention to your sense of passion. What makes you feel alive? What motivates the most in you in life? What arouses and absorb attention for hours? Don't worry about being able to see the whole picture immediately. As you look for ways to make contributions doing what you love, eventually a picture will emerge in your mind of how you can shape the future.

Master your leadership skills by attending our latest program called Level-Up Leadership with Pastors Ring on March 22 at the One BellPark Call Ingrid Leaño at [redacted] (Philippines) or 0917.9134.7064/833 and look for Rivelle. Visit us at www.ringsleaders.com.ph.)

Driftwood sustains artists . . .

FURNITURE sets and handcrafted products made of coconut driftwood are on display during the 16th Panagbenga Market Encounter in Baguio City. The sets were crafted by Century Furniture.

spring woodcraft from used, recycled, and "unclaimed" wood or timber.

"We buy old (pieces of) wood from construction workers, collect driftwood washed in the sea after a storm or hire some people to dig the roots of felled trees," says Christopher Macalinda.

The 27-year-old woodcraft apprentice is talking about the raw materials used for the different driftwood furniture, which are on display at the "Market Encounter" exhibit at Bonifacio Park.

The wooden craft display is one of 229 stalls at the Market Encounter, one of the features of the month-long Panagbenga (Baguio Flower) festival.

The driftwood furniture pieces on display are from the shop of Dennis Tumingay, a native of Hungduan, Ifugao, who, together with his family, settled and established a woodcraft business in town, Bangaan.

Macalinda, a trainer and nephew of Tumingay, says his uncle moved to Bangaan for better business opportunities. He says there are more sources of old wood there as old wooden houses are transformed into concrete structures.

Macalinda says interior Benguetnon is more ideal for closing wood than the uplands.

And in the driftwood business, the Ifugao's woodworking skills always come into play.

"Driftwood pieces have various natural designs so the result is a creative piece of furniture following Mother Nature's design enhanced by the Ifugao craftsmen's imagination and creativity," says Macalinda.

He says his uncle's clients include interior furniture dealers in Metro Manila and "walk-in" clients. "So we always join furniture exhibits like the Market Encounter to promote our products," he says.

A garden set on display at a stall Macalinda is supervising costs P15,000. Made of hardwood, which females cannot destroy the set can be used for generations, says Macalinda.

As trees are getting scarcer, more and more Ifugao woodworkers are combining driftwood furniture-making with purely woodcarving activities, says Macalinda.

As long as there are old, used and recycled wood available, he says the age-old skill of the Ifugaos will continue for a long time.

DINE-OUT Garden tools/cases displayed at the 16th Panagbenga Market Encounter held in Baguio City

CENTURY Furniture's custom driftwood four-layer jewelry set sold for P1,500.

MAGIC Owl Bucket made of vigan grass vase for sale for P1,500 at the Market Encounter in Baguio City

CENTURY Furniture's custom driftwood four-corner Dining Table set is priced at P40,000.

MarketH
MARKETH: SHOP-TESTLODGE, INC.

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Other Maxsmith Seminars for March-April 2011

MARCH

Mar 3-4, 2011	19th Market-Driving Strategies by Josiah Go
Mar 8-9, 2011	18th Managing a Successful Distributorship Operation by Emilio Montano III
Mar 10-11, 2011	3rd Winning More Business Using Selling Science by Ronny Gunawan
Mar 12-13, 2011	Entrepreneurship Strategy and Innovation Bootcamp by Josiah Go
Mar 14-15, 2011	29th Marketing and Sales Implementation by Chupi Leonard Go
Mar 16, 2011	New Prosperity Forum by Josiah Go and Ms. Marlene
Mar 22-23, 2011	3rd Viral Marketing by Donald Lim
Mar 24-25, 2011	The 4-Steps Strategic Sales Planning by Emilio Montano III

APRIL

Apr 5-6, 2011	Winning Agreements Using the Language of Negotiation by Ronny Gunawan
Apr 6, 2011	9 Pillars of Profit Strategy by Josiah Go
Apr. 7-8, 2011	20th Trade Marketing by Emilio Montano III
Apr. 9, 2011	13th Marketing and Advertising Budget by Chupi Leonard Go
Apr. 14-15, 2011	6th Business Model Innovation by Josiah Go
Apr. 26-27, 2011	Designing Route-To-Market Strategy by Emilio Montano III

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Old, used batteries give life to learning centers

Text and photos by
Eric Brent B. Lazo
Inquirer Visayas

BADIOUTIC BORDE—How does one company build learning resource centers (LRCs) out of used lead acid batteries (ULABs)?

The answer is in poverty simple: Donate the ULABs and Motolite buys it for a higher price. The money is then used to fund LRCs with the assistance of the Philippine Business for Social Progress (PBSP).

This is how Philippine Long Distance and Telephone Co. (PLDT) was able to generate P880,000, which was used to fund the establishment of 22 learning resource centers in remote areas in the Visayas.

"The learning resource centers have books, which are waiting for you to read. You also have shelves and a table which you can use while reading," PLDT senior community relations manager Evelyn del Rosario told pupils of Barangay San Miguel Elementary School here during a turnover ceremony last month.

On its marathon distributions to six schools in Bohol, Del Rosario told teachers to allow the students to make use of the books. "Let them wear these out. We will give books again," she said in Filipino.

PBSP executive director Rafael Lopa encouraged the pupils to take their studies seriously as they could help in the country's development.

"What we are giving you is just a small thing compared to what you need to do. It is important that you have access to books and that your lessons become you are the hope of the country. Dili pwede ang tapulan (Cockfights are not allowed)," Lopa said.

PLDT'S SENIOR community relations manager Evelyn del Rosario reads "Wer Haben Mir Zoo?" to pupils of Maliding Elementary School.

Thirst for books

It was like a fiesta at Maliding Elementary School when representatives from PLDT, PBSP, Motolite and the Department of Education arrived.

The schoolchildren offered dance numbers and the comforts prepared for her. Orosatel pig) and native delicacies for lunch.

During the ceremonial ribbon-cutting, the children rushed onstage after Del Rosario promised to read them a story.

At Catunao Elementary School, the inclined barangay hosts San Miguel town, the children showered "Wanna read, wanna read! (How they are.)," upon seeing the guests.

DEL ROSARIO reads to pupils of Barangay Cambangay Norte Elementary School. Besides her is Motolite's corporate social responsibility head, Nida Cayabyab.

"We don't have a cabinet full of books. It will be good to have one, read them and use the pictures," said 8-year-old Ella Mae Catunao.

Jessie Cañdijano, PBSP Visayas officer-in-charge, said excited faces always greeted them to the LRC turnovers. Most of the children only saw libraries in pictures, he said.

About 30 minutes by van from Barangay Cabasanan, 260 children greeted the entire Cambangay Norte Elementary School with bright colors. They were yellow shirts and waved small red and electric blue flags.

Classmates Handel Hao and Ken Francis said they were hoping to read many books to enrich their knowledge.

They both have the classic story "Tipakilang si Longgan," which taught them the essence of studying harder to fulfill their dreams. Handel wants to become a surgeon while Francis dreams of being a policeman.

For the environment

Launched in 2006, the Motolite PBSP Bulik Batteryo program aims to achieve two results.

One is to protect the environment by properly disposing and recycling ULABs which may potentially poison the soil. The other is to improve learning by giving books to pupils, training the teachers and building remedial reading camps.

"This donation to LRC is just the start. We will upgrade the skills of the teachers the sessions possible time," said Nida Cayabyab, corporate social responsibility head of Universal and Motolite Marketing Corp.

Cayabyab cited the initiative as an example of a private-public partnership—a program which is also being pushed by the Aquino administration.

The Bulik Batteryo program is also being undertaken in cooperation with the DepEd, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, and Philippine Recyclers Inc.

Eight of the 22 LRCs turned over are in Cebu, three in Iloilo, six in Bohol and five in Samar.

Each center is worth P40,000, Cabijano said. It takes 779 ULABs to generate P40,000.

Ninety-two percent of the ULABs were donated by the top 200 corporations in the country while 77 percent of total donations came from PLDT and Smart.

BUSINESS THIRSTY?

Coca-Cola Bottlers Philippines, Inc. is looking for high potential business partners for its distribution expansion program in Greater Manila Area (GMA), provinces of Bulacan and Rizal, part of Bicol Cavite, and San Pedro, Laguna.

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Landscape experts find place . . .

From page B1

and camera-equipped phones, visitors and locals alike marvel at over 30 landscapes and 35 "carpets of flowers" around an oval that ring true at the park.

These are entries of landscape artists, who are vying both for the prizes promised by the organizers and the promotion of their business.

As works of art, the landscapes express the artists' messages in trying to keep faith with the year's thoughtful theme of harmonizing the community and the environment.

For example, most artists' closes to use old wooden frames and implements, such as plows or discs and doors and windows, to highlight their work. This communicates the important message of recycling.

The mix of plants, rocks, stones, pebbles and gushing water from a fountain or a reservoir of manmade wall also introduces an ecological message in this age of urbanization where everything now covers much of the earth's surface.

The landscape artists are, in a way, reiterating an advocacy by American architect Daniel Burnham, who designed both Manila and Baguio in the early 1900s. Burnham had stressed the importance of open spaces and parks in his designs.

At the city advocacy "community and environment harmony," the artists have something to offer—their creativity and imagination, which, environmentalists say, can help bring fresh ideas to the way the city manages its land and resources.

Designers always incorporate landscape artists in the Modest Elevation because of their "secret herbs and" and creativity.

He has also embedded into architect garbage management system within the subdivision area.

"We have to show how things are done, so we have employed a dozen uniformed personnel to take care of all solid wastes, which they put regularly in a kind of areas ready for pick up by the city's garbage truck," he says.

From business can and rentals, the Market Encounter alone will be turning over P900,000 to the city treasury, says Bangoy. "But so we help generate income for the city we are also showing tips on managing wastes," he says.

The Market Encounter rules, including its emphasis on the authentic and ecological, has, in a way, set a precedent for neighboring towns.

La Trinidad, the capital town of Benguet, has adopted a similar version during its Strawberry Festival held yearly in March.

LANDSCAPE artists show off their designs in this year's Panagbenga landscape competition.

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The British School Manila is seeking a new intake of high calibre scholars to follow the international Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma. Since 1968, this globally recognised qualification has been providing students with a two year course to enter the world's top universities.

We would like to invite graduating high school students, born between 1 September 1994 to 31 August 1995, and currently studying in the Philippines to apply for scholarships to study the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme from August 2011 until June 2013.

Scholarships will be awarded on the basis of examination performance in standardised tests, mathematics, English language and by personal interview. These examinations will be held at the school on 28 & 29 March, 2011 (Monday & Tuesday).

Please apply submitting a copy of your latest transcript and a 500-word hand written essay on the statement:

"When mathematicians, historians and scientists say that they have explained something, are they using the word 'explain' in the same way?"

Please fill in the contact detail slip below and send with your essay on or before 18 March, 2011 (Friday) to the school's address below.

We will be launching the scholarship programme on 5 March, 2011 from 4.15 to 6.45 p.m. at the 13th UK Education Fair, Crown Plaza Hotel, Ortigas Center, Pasig City. The UK Education Fair will run from 4 to 5 March, 2011 from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Shortlisted applicants will receive further details.

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LLDA gets $10 million funding for Laguna Lake clean-up

STAKEHOLDERS OF Laguna Lake are appealing to the national government to engage them in efforts to rehabilitate the lake, as only a holistic, integrated and participative approach can solve its rapid deterioration. Laguna Governor ER Ejercito said a truly responsive solution to the lake's problem requires the involvement of all the stakeholders - particularly the local government units and their constituents within the lake's basin. The LLDA is set to administer a second phase in cleaning up the heavily-silted and garbage-filled lake throughout a $10-million funding from the World Bank and the Netherlands. Half of the amount will come in the form of loan from the World Bank and half as grant by the Netherlands. The $10 million project has gotten the approval of the National Economic Development Authority. It supposedly involves projects to preserve the Laguna de Bay watershed and support its sustainable management.

Wow Greenhills big furniture show

TOURISTS AND foreign guests visit the country because of world-class products like furniture, native cuisine and tropical sun. Lucky foreign visitors attending shoppertots to crowd the 18th National Furniture, Furnishing and Fashion Festival back to back with the 7th Philippine Kids Arts and Crafts Festival from March 10 to April 11 at the Greenhills Shopping Complex. Organizer of the much-awaited trade fair is Primex Asia Trade Planners and Convention Organizers (Palaspo).

Give your heart some love

EVERYONE'S GOLDEN hearts - including Cardinal Santos Medical Center. For the whole month of February, CSMC is initiating its "Love Your Heart" campaign to promote heart awareness, especially patients with ailment diseases, to keep an eye on their hearts. CSMC has Special Heart Rates for the EECG (electrocardiogram) procedure priced at P475 while the Treadmill Stress Test and 2D Echo package is the only P4,000. CSMC invites you to "Love Your Heart" today. For appointments and further inquiries, call 724-41 10 or visit Cardinal Santos Medical Center at 10 Wilson St., Greenhills West, San Juan City.

The newest San Mig Light babe

SERENITO Lightmas come up with a sizzling hot TV commercial this February, a fresh material that will surely send temperatures of fans of the country's number 1 beer calorie beer to rise a notch. The TV ad features the exciting thing in show biz - a young female gifted with a face and a body that viewers easily noticed where she was seated in a reality TV show: San Mig Lights the country's first and leading light beer brand because it is low in calorie and total fitting. This allows beer lovers to have a "malitable, relaxing moment" even buckets of San Mig Light. Watch out for this newest and the hottest ever Serenito Light commercial this February.

Low-end home developers back VP Binay's moves

LINKING HOUSING builders affiliated with the Organization of Socialized Housing Developers of the Philippines (OSHDP) welcomed the successful awarding today of all ports assets to government-leaning, given by Vice President Jejomar C. Binay, concurrent Chair of the Housing and Urban Development Coordinating Council. Engr. Jefferson S. Bongat, OSHDP national president, said in a press statement that developers saluting to the privatization of socialized housing units, costing P400,000 or less, does express approval option for the inclusion of P3-BP, as a member of the "super council" on housing, recently created by VP Binay. The OSHDP's representation to the 46,000 Council in Cavayan Binay, currently the board chair of the organization.

Celebrate love at Berjaya Manila Hotel

WANT TO THE flame of a fairly fabulous with Berjaya Manila Hotel's extraordinary Valentine's Day room package with starting rate of Php300 net, inclusive of taxes and service charge. Package includes special Valentine's dinner for two at Hemingway's restaurant red roses, signature pralines, a bottle of wine and breakfast in bed. Let this be a special anniversary or do lovely with each other and whisper sweet nothings over this romantic Valentines treat. BMP Valentine's Day Room package is valid until Feb. 28. For reservations, call 750-1500 or fax at 750-6160 on e-mail manila.rsvn@berjayahotels.com.

Harness the gift that is fish oil

FISH OIL is one of the most renowned that are main user to combat the effects of aging, stress, pollution and environmentally-shot. Food is usually considerable to supplements, but in the case fish oil, capsule or liquid form is may be a better source than the fish that produce it because it is one that to be free of mercury and organic toxins. Good thing you can conveniently enjoy the benefits of fish oil with each soft gel capsule of Cenovis Fish Oil, an all-natural fish oil supplement that is the leading dietary supplement brand in Australia. Manufactured with Sprod 4Omega, each 1,000 mg soft gel capsule contains DHA and EPA essential fatty acids. Best of all, each soft gel capsule only costs less than P1C. It is odorless and has no fish-like after taste which is important for consumers.

SMART PROVIDES FIRST AID IN ATI-ATIHAN

The streets of Kalibo and Cruz Gabon were lined throughout the streets of Kalibo in the recently concluded Ati-Atihan. Ohayan Sweet employees Smart Communications (Smart) and Philippine National Red Cross volunteers were on hands on call devices and rolled towers at the first aid booths at the base of the Kalibo Public Heading the patrol were a team and their Cruiser from eaters load some "round the clock and loaded motor buses and cars on the road sustained by downtown causing the sailboat and pedestrian lanes streets was the blood pressure monitoring. During the event Smart volunteers on basic first aid is part of Kalibo Smart's corporate social responsibility and community service program. Kalibo Smart's team initiatives include providing communication support to responding agencies, deployment of emergency volunteers, and support to private and government entities from that prepare communities and help them cope with calamities and disasters.

COKE AT CONRSP CONVENTION

Coca-Cola Philippines kept members and guests of the Council of Hotel and Restaurant Executives of the Philippines (Conrsp) hydrated to refill body and stimulate refreshing beverages and with a highly informative talk on the importance of hydration from Coca-Cola Philippines Scientific Regulatory Affairs director Angie Alba. It was held from the 40th during their 19th Annual Convention at the Holiday Inn Clark, in Angeles, Pampanga last Feb. 3. The convention gathered 200 hospitality management educators and practitioners engaged in the administration and teaching of Hotel and Restaurant Management (HRM) programs from all over the country. This is the biggest annual gathering of HRM educators and practitioners where participants can share insights, explore opportunities and improve issues relevant to the continuous development of hospitality education in the Philippines and in the rim world. Alba is sharing a part of Coca-Cola Philippines' continuing efforts in the positively by informing the general public about the benefits of its wide portfolio of beverage products. In photo from left: Jayson Westerhalt, Binay (Conrsp board member), Alba, Ito Bernardo, Jean Rowena Tagaca-op (Conrsp board member) Marivon Penong (Conrsp convention chair 2011).

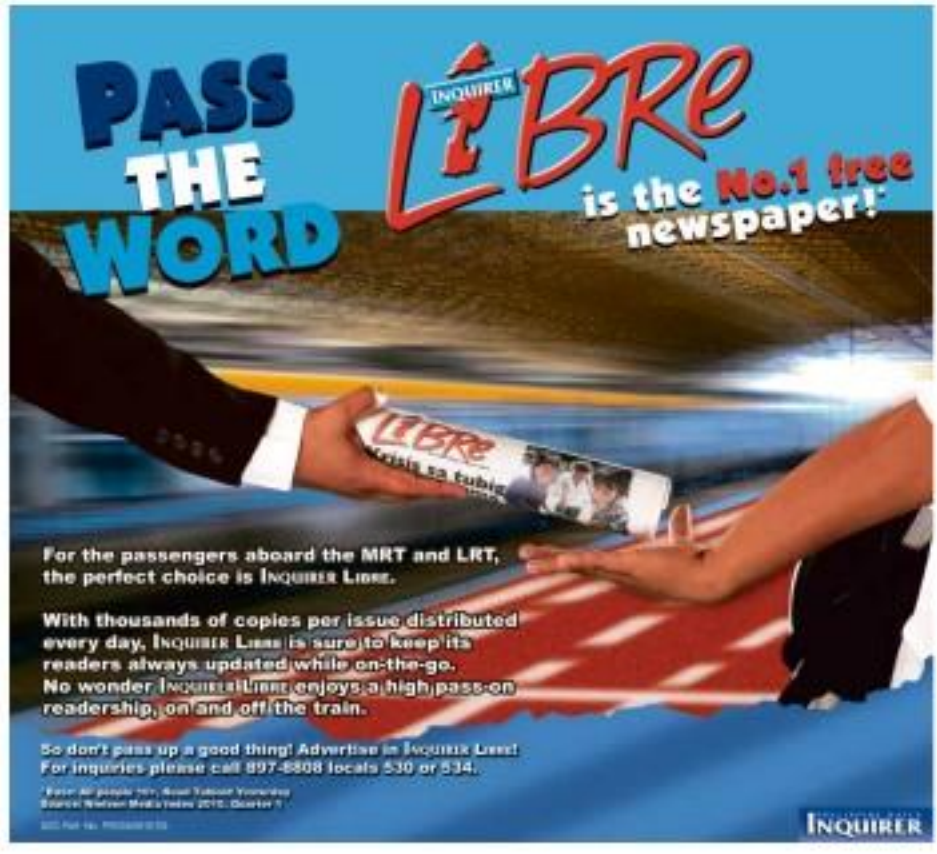
DIRECT LINK AWARDS NETBOOK RAFFLE WINNERS

I don't Link announced recently the winners of its netbook raffle. Thousand members the nationwide online e-wealth activity that ran from July 1 to Dec. 31 2010. The netbook raffle was intended for new Direct Link customers who can insurance policies signed up between July and December 2010. The winners were selected from respective Asia Cruz Pic. 10 of 2010 including the awarding ceremony held last Feb. 4. The lucky winners were Rodolfo Pena from Pantabangan, Nueva Ecija; Ito Cortez from Makati; Mary Ann Macalo, Benguet; Lilia and Ferdinand Ito Carillo all from Quezon City.

Ella Rose P. Yabut, general manager of Direct Link claims, "Direct Link plans to continue offering attractive to also acknowledge clients for choosing Direct Link as their non insurance brand. Given its entry in the non insurance sector in 2008, Direct Link has introduced a number of unique perks from free E-Pass and E-Tag, to thousands worth of gas cards, belly promos discounts and more all this and why Mas, among others. In photo are the winners of the netbook raffle (from left) Edgardo S. Rosario, senior vice President of BDO Life & Marketing Division; Benguet Corp. President Lorna and spouse Rodrigo Cortez; Mia Grace A. Yabut, General Manager of Direct Link; and Rodi Pangilinan Marquez, marketing head of Direct Link.

AMA BANK RECOGNIZES ITS TOP PERFORMING PERSONNEL IN LOANS AND DEPOSIT

AMA Bank recently recognized its top performing personnel in loans and deposit. Shown (from left) are Allan Mangan, top business loan marketing officer; Cleo Faustino, top auto loan marketing officer; Edgardo Vega, top business loan accountant; Raquel Mackenzie, top deposit generation AVP; Director Albert Buencamino; and Jaime Jack Gil, Khalida R. Aguilal, FUNDS Mayeda C. Salinas, Alma Valdez, top deposit generation manager and Justine Jo-Marie, top deposit generation senior manager. As of Dec. 31, 2010, AMA Bank's total assets increased by 36% from 2.7 to 3000 to 3.8 to 3810. Total loans grew by 36% from 2.38 to 2.86 to 3810. Total deposit increased by 36% from 2B to 2.7 thru 3010. And net income after tax increased substantially by 530% from 108 to 688. As months as of Dec. 31, 2010 stood at 1436M.



Elevate Lifestyle at *Royal Palm Residences.*

Two high-rise towers are set to become the final landmarks of DMCI Homes' Royal Palm Residences, a first-in-Davao community in Lanang City.

Sky Lounge located at Rawai Tower

The 18-storey twin towers, Rawai and Kamala, will soon break ground to establish an exclusive and comfortable setting for individuals looking for a home that affords them the atmosphere of a vacation getaway. Inspired by the relaxing and old-world charm of Thai architecture, the two final towers of the 10-building community are sure to stand out with the buildings' posh and elegant lines. The last two buildings will also feature the common details of the first eight structures – as highlighted by the finial roof design, earth tone exterior that extends inside the units, and eclectic Thai ornaments which add character to the whole community.

The Luminent® design technology is a breakthrough system by DMCI Homes which maximizes the flow of natural light and ventilation inside the building. The advantage of the design is achieved through the three-story high openings at the front and back of the buildings called Sky Patios, and through the breezeways in every floor. The introduction of the Sky Gardens – which consists of three-level Sky Patios and Central Atriums located in every 6 floors – provides channels through which air can move. The openings allow fresh air to flow in and also allow stale or hot air to be sucked out. This state-of-the-art building technology allows greens dotting the property to sustained within the community.

Artist's rendition of Royal Palm Residences' iconic Clubhouse

Another unique feature of the two towers is the Podium – a garden-like space which will connect Rawai and Kamala. The area is considered the perfect nook for those on the lookout for a personal space that's quiet and close to nature.

Sky Patio

Master's Bedroom

Available homes start from two-bedroom (51-73 sqm), to three-bedroom units (78-106 sqm.). Condo units are delivered in ready-to-receive finish that is easy to design according to one's preference. A grand lobby for both high-rise towers will instantly set a distinction for the residents, and showcase the owners' taste for only the best.

More than the advantages of the design, the community's Thai-resort ambiance and facilities afford residents to lead a lifestyle of their dreams. Just like living in one's very own resort, Rawai and Kamala residents will get to enjoy the one-hectare central amenity. A nurturing mix of water features, landscaped gardens, and modern facilities gives a balanced selection where one can enjoy leisure and relaxation.

Those buying a unit at Rawai and Kamala will also enjoy the services of DMCI Homes' Property Management team – clients are assured of the security and maintenance of their homes even when away. The team will also take care of moving-in assistance as well as leasing options.

The first high-rise tower, Rawai is set to be delivered on January 2013.

DMCI Homes is the country's premier triple A builder/developer that brings serviced, themed communities within reach of urban families who once had limited residential options, but still aspire to achieve a comfortable, enriching quality of life proximate to their place of work. For more information, call (02) 324-6888 or visit www.dmcihomes.com.

Artist's rendition of Rawai and Kamala Towers

CALL IT ENTERPRISE, CALL IT FUSION.

SMART Enterprise leads EXPLOSIVE Philippine business growth in the new wireless frontier

The latest chapter in the mobile phone's evolution is its realization as a viable business platform. And herein lies the next frontier of synergies and innovations. As SMART puts it, its "the other side of the mouse", promising a great business "fusion" or an explosive growth in the enterprise market.

This fusion refers to the launch of a new suite of next generation machine-to-machine (M2M) communications services under the as-launched business unit named SMART Enterprise, from SMART Business Solutions. The unit has been around for some time, although not as well known, especially alongside its consumer unit—family phones and SMART Bro Internet—despite its own significant contributions. First key solutions, the first wave of many, were Telemetrik SMART Telemetry, Telfleet Plus, a mobile phone application for merchandising, and wireless logistics solutions.

The Next Generation

Four key technological developments have come into play to the benefit of SMART's customers: the explosion of network bandwidth; the multiplicity of platforms, content, services and applications; the introduction of game-changing, net-enabled devices such as smartphones and tablets; and finally, the emergence of cloud-computing. "These very same factors are combining to make businesses more receptive to next-generation Enterprise services," says SMART Chief Wireless Advisor Orlando B. Vea. The timing could not have been more perfect; in fact, to promptly act on these technological developments, was an exercise of responsibility.

According to Mr. Vea, the 'fusion' of these factors results in an explosive growth in the efficiency of services, as well as profitability or what he calls "next-generation revenues"; a win-win situation for businesses and consumers. He highlights how SMART's network has promoted wireless medical technologies that greatly aid both physicians and patients, emphasizing the innate impact on the social and economic well-being of people while delivering further next-generation services.

"With the introduction of the SMART Enterprise brand, we are reaffirming our commitment to shift from a mere traditional product-centric (ICT) provider, into (hopefully) a customer-focused ICT (Information and Communication Technology) solutions partner to all our enterprise relationships," says PLDT SVP for Customer Sales and Marketing Group and Head of SMART Enterprise Eric Alberto. Reiterating the brand SMART Enterprise, in his words, is described as "simple, yet encompassing in its character, a brand that reflects how converged ICT solutions can unlock new and exciting opportunities and create breakthroughs in business." Mr. Alberto is credited for fostering the transition of the PLDT Corporate Business Group being "more creative" towards building lasting relationships with clients. This is crucial in creating "bespoke solutions" for each specialized business need. SMART Enterprise builds on emerging Person-to-Person (P2P), Peer-to-Machine (P2M), and M2M technologies for these solutions; utility meter management, mobile-connected smart buildings, self-tow management, connected asset, connected vehicle, remote healthcare monitoring, and expanded e-banking collections. Mr. Alberto further explained that these are made possible through partnerships with domain-experts.

SMART Chief Wireless Advisor Orlando B. Vea describes the next generation—the fusing point in technology business and consumers are expected to fuse.

Head of PLDT Corporate Business Group and SMART Enterprise Sales and Marketing Head Joey Hernandez, the key solution of Enterprise Solutions

The SMART Metering system. Meralco's brand-new cutting-edge remote electricity monitoring solution. Proudly standing by it from left to right are Head of PLDT Corporate Business Group and SMART Enterprise Sales and Marketing Head Joey Hernandez, PLDT SVP for Customer Sales and Marketing Group and Head of SMART Enterprise Eric Alberto, Meralco SVP and Head of Customer Retail Services, Cory Marketing and Communication A.V Pacillo, SMART Chief Wireless Advisor Orlando Vea, Meralco EVP and Head of Network Ricky Buencamino and Meralco CIO Manhyn Cuan.

Waves of the Wireless World

Joey Hernandez, Head of PLDT Corporate Business Group and SMART Enterprise Sales and Marketing Head, gave detailed overviews of the new solutions. He first reflected on the "world-renowned love affair" Filipinos have with their mobile phones, adding that "some people say their opportunity doesn't break... it merely texts" before expounding on how this intimate relationship "has evolved over the years, from plain texting and calling to mobile internet and now mobile applications through smartphones," pointing out that today's consumer is more sophisticated. Corporate enterprise endeared further evolution with a growing demand for more business functionality, leading to a slew of new services, including M2M solutions now ready to be rolled out, with many more in development phase.

The first of these is SMART Metering—digital utility meters equipped with modems that transmit information through wireless data services—a solution made for and in collaboration with Meralco. Among its benefits to Meralco starting on the risk and costs involved in deploying human agents to read meters, perform maintenance, disconnect and activate services. Remotely gathering readings in real time makes for more accurate reporting, quicker and more efficient response and reduced, less cost than deploying personnel and equipment in remote territories.

The second is Telfleet Plus for the North Luzon Expressway (NLEX), developed for the Manila North Tollways Corporation (MNTC) which uses an RFID system and SMART Money payment accounts. Aimed primarily at enterprise customers with fleet operations, owners can save resources and manage their fleet, and wirelessly send toll payments instead of cash. Trucks and other vehicles pass through select SMART Enterprise terminals to now become "barrier-less tollgates", making for much faster and smoother rides.

The Enquirer of SMART Enterprise Product Development presents SMART logistics and merchandising solutions.

For the merchandising service a service for mobile phones to collect and transmit data between several outlets and head offices is in the works. The unit method entailed information being slowly collected and sent manually through paper and pen. Shared-reader can take advantage of quicker inventory management and more effective marketing and promotions made possible by this application, which can be run on even the most basic of phones. On the logistics side, an M2M application, using a special device tracks and monitors packages moving from delivery and receipt points. Once again it uses wireless technology with internal to-to further increase effort required to facilitate information transfer.

Just Around the Corner

These pioneering wireless applications are poised to offer even more revolutionary solutions. Wireless solutions already make an impact to existing services such as medical transcriptions, mobile laboratories, remote prosthetic profiling, even the 2010 elections. PLDT's machines, all key elements of PLDT and SMART. Clearly, government, like business, also stands to gain much from a greater openness to the mobile-first, this "wonder of technology", as Mr. Alberto opined.

One of the attendees at the launch, a senior member of the press, commented that SMART is unique in pursuing this direction—expanding and generating solid contributions to development and infrastructure severely lacking in the country. "That means they're working, they're trying hard...and that's good, as far as the people are concerned. Something is going on," he says. Indeed, such new frontier developments, and the renewed spirit of SMART are a radical departure from the product-centric consumer game. They illustrate the drive to build a better country, a better tomorrow. Mr. Hernandez quotes legendary management guru Peter Drucker, summing up the venture and the mission defining SMART Enterprise: "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

Sunday STYLE Travel

Incredible, indeed—but there's more to India than the Taj Majal

Salman Rushdie describes it as 'a gigantic place... manifestly a rough diamond two thousand miles long and more or less as wide, as large as Europe... populated by around a sixth of the human race'

HANDMADE plate from Kashmir shows carvings of the palace and portrait of Shah Jahan, Taj Mahal builder, and wife Mumtaz Mahal.

Text and photos by Gilden Cadiz

GOING TO INDIA isn't as costly as it may sound.

A round-trip economy ticket to New Delhi via Jet Airways, a leading Indian international airline, costs about $600 (P27,800). Jet Airways flies out of NIA daily from Manila to DE aboard Philippine Airlines in a one-hour flight, followed by five hours from DE to Delhi.

Prices in India are quite cheap; one rupee is worth about a peso. Parlor (a mid-priced hotel accommodation) and packet grocery (or food and shopping, and P50,000 to P80,000 would be good enough for an Indian holiday.

That answer, believe us, is more than worth it once you've soaked into the mind-dazzling, marvelous, mystical subcontinent once described by Salman Rushdie as "a gigantic place... manifestly a rough diamond two thousand miles long and more or less as wide, as large as Europe... populated by around a sixth of the human race, home of the largest film industry on earth, famous as the 'world's biggest democracy.'"

A description, of course, that barely scratches the surface of India, but tantalizing enough to provide a burning context to the imagery that overwhelms you once you're on Indian ground—the buzzing, throbbing masses everywhere you look, the riot of sound and smell and color, the confusion of palaces and temples and cows and wood gathers, the dusty chaos of the road as well as the stillness of the Jumna River behind the Taj Mahal—the sheer life force pervading in this ancient land.

The "Golden Triangle" of Delhi, Agra and Jaipur alone, in the northern part of India, has some of the country's most indelible cultural treasures—the Taj Mahal, the abandoned royal complex of Fatehpur Sikri, Qutab Minar and its brick minaret, the hilltop Amber Fort, as well as the modern metropolis of New Delhi with its wide boulevards and stately buildings, the capital of the former British Empire of which India was the crown jewel.

For Filipinos in search of unusual travel destinations, India offers an alluring option. "The Philippines is an emerging market for us," confirms Sanjeev Chopra, APP of Go India Journeys, the country's biggest tour operator.

Chopra has been referring an increasing number of young, travel-savvy Filipinos to India (about 77,000 passengers last year, according to a Jet Airways bulletin). Brought up on the internet, influenced by a global popculture that has embraced Bollywood and Bollywood's Kajol, and comfortable with the growing Indian expatriate community in Manila whose restaurants enrich the city with the flavors and textures of Indian cuisine, many Pinoys are taking a second look at their giant Asian neighbor.

For first-time travelers to India, a Delhi-Agra-Jaipur tour offers a heady mix of touristical sights and immersive experiences. Here are some essentials:

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Incredible, indeed—but there's more to India than the Taj Majal

From page C1

Taj Mahal

It's a cliché to say a visit to India wouldn't be complete without gazing at the architectural wonder, but—errr, the cliché is too much to be reality. The apogee of the might and splendor of the fabled Mughal empire, this white-marble mausoleum, built by the 16th-century emperor Shah Jahan for his favorite wife, Mumtaz Mahal, is in Agra, five hours' drive from Delhi.

The road offers a picturesque view of India beyond the city skyscrapers...at least still treated to agitated-looking, rural matter hawking with produce of all kinds, the women invariably dressed in saris, bullock carts, cows and monkeys...sacred animals in the Hindu pantheon...an undistinguished part of the bathtub.

VISITORS: Going up to enter the Taj Mahal's burial chamber (their feet in soft shoe covers to protect the marble flooring

"A LOVELY thing, perhaps the loveliest of things," wrote Salman Rushdie of India's most iconic building.

Agra Fort

Unmistakable for its red sandstone coloring, this massive palace-complex, now a Unesco World Heritage site, was the home of the Mughal kings for about 350 years. As early as 1000 AD, parts of the fort were already up.

The legendary Peacock Throne—a shaw literally swarming with emeralds, sapphires, rubies, pearls and other precious stones, commissioned by Emperor Shah Jahan and later carted off as booty by invading Persians, thus becoming the inheritance of the Shah of Iran—used to occupy pride of place in one of the palace's grand halls.

Other notable sights: a "hall of interest"—an airy pavilion of white marble with walls of sheer glass inlays; a medieval toilet—the enormous stone bathtub of Emperor Jahangir (Shah Jahan's father), now sitting at the fort courtyard but which used to be hauled into the battlefield for use by the fearsome Mughal; the tower balcony where Shah Jahan, in his sunset years, was kept a prisoner by his usurper son Aurangzeb. From there, it was said he spent innumerable moments gazing at the ethereal vision of the Taj Mahal in the distance.

FROM above, right: Agra Fort, made of red sandstone, and Emperor Jahangir's bathtub, displayed at the fort courtyard

Fatehpur Sikri

A "ghost city" because after having built it from scratch as his royal capital, Emperor Akbar and his court decamped from it after only 14 years, reportedly for lack of water. What remained under the ministrations of custodians was a striking assembly of red sandstone buildings that blended three distinct cultures—Persian, Islamic and Indian...subdued by ghost, flowery patches built by the gardens having empress himself.

LOCAL visitors in the abandoned royal city of Fatehpur Sikri

Amber Fort

A mesmerizing shakti with a commanding view of the surrounding countryside, the sprawling Amber Fort dates back to the 1500s, and was the seat of power of the state's royals before Jaipur. You can either drive up to its gates in a jeep, or take a heavily-trafficked ride up in the main courtyard, which opens up to ever more lavish palaces and halls within.

As in the Agra fort, a ceremonial hall has walls and ceilings completely embedded with thousands of tiny, glittering mirror pieces. Viewing the fortress from across Maota Lake, the structure perfectly reflected in the still waters, is a unique photographic experience.

CLOCKWISE from left: elephants for hire at Amber Fort; view at Amber Fort's main courtyard and surrounding countryside; full of mirrors, its walls and ceilings studded with thousands of tiny mirror pieces; details of wall-mounted canopy frames; entrance to the quarters of the maharajah's harem

Jaipur, the 'Pink City'

Rajasthan's capital earned the moniker because, by law, all establishments and buildings within the walled city are washed in a pink hue (more like pale salmon, actually).

The first planned city in India, Jaipur acquired its rose palette in 1853 when Bertie (later Britain's King Edward VII) visited Rajasthan. The state's monarch ordered the city walls repainting to welcome him.

Among the main avenues is Hawa Mahal, (palace whose five-story façade blossoms with tiny latticed windows behind which the maharajah's wives could discreetly view the city scene below.

FROM top: Hawa Mahal in Jaipur, standing in with the City's rose-colored ancestors at night; magically lit. (Left) Artifacts for sale

HOW TO GET THERE

- For visa application, the Indian Embassy in Manila is at Dasmariñas Village, Makati City. Application fee for tourist visa is P2,100; the village charges P100 for transport from the gate to the embassy.
- Jet Airways flies daily to Delhi from Hong Kong. (From Manila, PAL connects in Hong Kong via Philippine Airlines, which has a tie-up with Jet Airways) in Manila, call (632) 902-0000, 813-0000 or 338-3777 or visit www.jetairways.com.
- Go India Journeys arranges tours and accommodations in partnership with some Philippine travel agencies. Call Sanjeev Chopra +91-9810028013 or +120-4010800, or visit www.goindiajourneys.com/

FROM above, left: Hindu gods and goddesses in ivory, ceramics and gold; faces of Qutub Minar, its façade adorned with Islamic carvings and inscriptions; Indian vendor selling bangles in Delhi; stunningly ornate elephant figurines; tourists posing with Qutub Minar in the background

More sights, shopping haunts

In Delhi stands Jama Masjid, said to be the world's largest mosque. The later was first built in the 1 000's by Muslim conquerors from Afghanistan. It stands on a garden-compound that, on the Sunday we visited, was brimming with schoolchildren and local tourists.

Jaipur's main streets are a shopping fantasia for everything from bags and brocades to bangles and handicrafts, most of them hand-made. Prices are a steal—a lavishly beaded bag can cost from 60-150 rupees, depending on your haggling skills.

At every tourist attraction, a horde of sellers throws themselves literally in your face—mini-Taj Mahals, keychains, pencils, scarves, jewelry boxes. It pays to feign disinterest until the prices get shelled, usually to less than half the original.

For a more upscale shopping place complete with fixed-price menus of traditional bridal outfits and ethnic performances, the Rajdhani Cultural and Convention Center is a virtual palace offering resale and rentals of the country's portable attractions: marble inlay tables, carpets, wood and ivory carvings, ceramics, pieces from Kashmir, gilded statues, housewares, silverware, embroidery, you-name-it. The spectacular arena is made to a rajahhill kaleidoscopic, multicolored—incredible.

E-mail gmail@inquirer.com.ph, visit www.gilbertolis.blogspot.com, follow on Twitter or www.twitter.com/gilbertolis

By 2030, we'd need two earths

By Antonio M. Claparols
Contributor

WHITE island from Obispo beach

WE TOOK a long flight from Manila to Auckland, New Zealand (stopping over in Hong Kong), and finally boarded a small aircraft to Whakatane.

It was our first time to visit this place where the Ngati Awa, one of the main Maori tribes of New Zealand, played host early last month to the "Power Sharing Conference" because the planet can no longer sustain the present development modality organized by Secretariat Inuwa for Conservation of Nature-Commission on Environment, Economic and Social Policy (SICN-CEESP).

The first day of the conference brought us to Kohi-tahutahu Marae, the community where the Ngati Awa population: about 10,000 live.

We were welcomed with the traditional songs and learned how the tribe succeeded in preserving its cultural heritage after undergoing a long fight against the crown and the colonizers.

It was only 17 years ago that the Ngati Awa people won the right to occupy their ancestral lands and to begin the long process of uniting the tribe.

They have come a long way having preserved their culture by first and foremost, speaking their traditional language. (They say that to know the language, they have to culture.) They have even established a school for their grandchildren's children.

But like many other indigenous peoples, the Ngati Awa are affected by development activities outside their borders. Climate change is one of them.

Quantum change

The Power Sharing Conference covered relevant topics ranging from peak oil, climate change, the dying planet, poverty, economics, and habitat loss to the rights of indigenous peoples, including prior and informed consent to extractive industries.

It was agreed that at the rate damage was being done to the world's resources, a quantum transformation in ways of consumption was needed to save Mother Earth as she could sustain us and generations to come.

Dr. Ashish Kothari, the president of IUCN, summed it up very well: that we are suffering from "affluenza" (the rich are getting richer and less than two percent of the global consumers are the wealthy, wealthy) and "povertyzia" (the poor are getting poorer).

Kothari warned that by the end of 2030, we would need two Earths to sustain life.

Dr. Elinor Ostrom, a member of CEESP and Nobel Laureate for economics, spoke about the common pool resource and the value of the global commons.

Ostrom said we needed to move away from narrow economic issues and focus more on social ecological systems like rivers, lakes and forests which have more value because they sustain life.

She raised the need to protect both marine and terrestrial resources, to abate the politics of destruction and export activities, and to reclaim the global commons from corporate control.

Bite the bullet

The conference produced many recommendations, some of them urgent:

- To develop renewable energy.
- To change paradigms of thinking and educate the people.
- To step on the brakes on development and go slow in extractive industries.

We have to bite the bullet and control all our habitats and ecosystems for they are what sustain us all.

We have to realize that colonization has never gone away and has just taken a new form, and that a transformation, and not mere change, is necessary.

We have to remember that all things that exist cannot be measured and all things that can be measured hardly count, that we cannot have food security without food sovereignty, and that should we continue with present economic models and consumption patterns, all civilization will perish.

The author is the president of the Ecological Society of the Philippines and a member of SICN, CEESP.

THE CONFERENCE outdoors

The Power Sharing Conference covered topics ranging from peak oil to climate change and the dying planet

SM Foundation's 61st center for the elderly opened in Marikina

SEXY RISING, communications director of SM Foundation, shared this story with me about Felicidad T. Ty which probably explains why "Nanang Ty" is committed to helping the poor in their education and healthcare needs.

After the War, the young Ms Ty would go to Quiapo Church to pray and she would always see mom doing something for the poor scattered around the churchyard. This impressed Ms Ty and, perhaps, she thought she would do some when she was financially able.

Mr Ty has been fulfilling that personal vow. Recently, the two-story Felicidad T. Ty Center for the Elderly was put up in Marikina City. It was the 61st center for the elderly put up by SM Store. Antonio Marikina Mayor Jose Antonio Inarga graced the new, fully renovated and refurbished former Shield Health Organization-sponsored Senior Citizens Lifestyle Center that was destroyed by Typhoon Ketsana "Ondoy".

The PTS Elderly Center boasts of a multipurpose hall and livelihood center on the second floor. On the first, it has a reading room, dining room, kitchen, comfort room, auditorium and conference room.

The 100 lucky was sponsored by Connie Angeles, SM executive director for health and medical programs.

Rcbi PWU president

Good things are happening at the Philippine Women's University. Supreme Court Chief Justice Renato Corona will induct

Dr. Francisco Ibering Ibrahim as the ninth president of the Philippine Women's University, succeeding Amelia Benitez Reyes, on Feb. 22, 4 p.m., at the Philippine International Convention Center.

Ibrahim finished his doctorate on Comparative Literature "summa cum laude" at the University of Wisconsin. He has had 18 years of teaching experience. Dr. Ibrahim is the son of Dr. Jose Gonzalo Ibrahim and the late Betty Benitez.

80th PWU grand reunion

The Philippine Women's University (PWU) will hold its 80th grand reunion, with the theme "Viva La Vie," a month-long celebration on Feb. 26, 4 p.m., at Centennial Hall of the historic Manila Hotel.

Amelia C. Alonzo, PWU Alumnae Association president, said this week's golden and silver jubilarians are high school and college graduates of class '61 and '86 respectively, while the jubilarians are all graduates belonging to batches of years ending '61 and '06.

The musical numbers in the rhythm of rumba, samba, salsa and boogie will be presented by the jubilarians, the sapphire jubilarians of classes '62 and '87, and the diamond jubilarians of classes '63 and '88.

Call 5268021 loc. 118, 0916.9100681, e-mail mel.alonzo@gmail.com, viviencelouiseo@gmail.com, ade888_1999 @yahoo.com.

Jewelry and pina exhibit

Fashion designer Cora Mamitas and events director/jewelry designer Celia Bonifacio Sors wanted up to show their collections at the PWU Art Gallery until Feb. 28, in cooperation with the Bayanihan Folk Arts Foundation and Iloilo Foundation. It is a project of the Center for Culture, Arts, Music and Sports of the PWU.

Bonifacio explained that creating combinations of gems and pearls making to her becoming a dyed industry but through his Obata line collection made up of necklaces, bracelets and earrings, he is romanticizing the treasures of a craft.

THE BEATIFICATION cause of Mother Rosario Arroyo, OP, has been brought to the Vatican.

OP. FRANCISCO Ibering Ibrahim, 9th president of the Philippine Women's University

Mother Rosario Arroyo, OP

After more than year of gathering data, conducting interviews, documenting letters received and producing a brief biography on the founder of the Dominican Sisters of the Most Holy Rosary of the Philippines based in Iloilo, Iloilo, the closing ceremonies of the Diocesan Process for the Constitution of the Servant of God Mother Rosario Arroyo de la Vinciter was held last Jan. 3, at the Dominican Sisters Chapel in Molo.

Msgr. Bro. Angel Lagdameo, DD, judge of the Tribunal for the Cause of the Canonization officiated the Mass. Archbishop Lagdameo also opened the cause for the sainthood of Mother Rosario on Oct. 25.

Gathered documents contained in 12 boxes were officially sealed and were brought by Bro. Fr. Antonio Militantes, OAR, postulator, to the Vatican a few days later. He will actively work with the committee on the cause for canonization in Rome.

Sor Rowena Ann Gonzales, Dominican Sisters' Mother Rosario Arroyo, the public is encouraged to e-mail their stories to tanyap@yahoo.com c/o Sister Visitacion Alerta, DR or call (032).2379828 or (0915).1366372. Or you may send a self-addressed envelope with stamps to the Mother Rosario Arroyo Commission, Dominican Sisters' Mother Rosario, Molo, Iloilo City, 5000 Philippines.

My friend Janis Robinson introduced me to the devotion to Mother Rosario in 1990 when she believed to be a miraculous intercession. Then, Dulce Pesole Bautista who wrote the biography of Mother Rosario is praying to her as well.

PURELY PERSONAL

Josephine Barcelo

Mass for Edsa

Fr. Tito Caluang will celebrate the Thanksgiving Mass on the occasion of the EDSA anniversary on Feb. 25, at 6:30 p.m. at the Pinaric Plum Chapel.

The Blue Army will bring the image of Our Lady of Fatima which was mounted on an army tank during the Edsa revolution. She will also be brought in a procession at the Edsa shrine on Feb. 25.

The Hong Kong Disneyland Page

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Delightful moments come alive

With Disney's Story Time at the themed hotels, the magic continues right to your bedroom

By Kenneth M. dela Rosa

Moments of magic never stops at the Hong Kong Disneyland Resort as the magnificent adventure continues right before your bedtime, literally.

That's because as part of the prestigious resort's 5th anniversary special with the theme "Celebration in the Air," guests staying at the two Disney-themed hotels can complete their magical journey with the innovative Disney's Story Time.

It's an activity that is sure to make the hearts of kids and kids-at-heart skip a beat as Disney story tellers come right to your bedroom to tell stories only Disney characters know best.

Imagine this: You look yourself in bed with a hot choco when you hear a knock on the door. You open it and it's your favorite Disney character come alive. He animatedly reads you a story until you find yourself in dreamland dreaming of, of course, the fun day at Disneyland.

What better way to make sure you get sweet dreams. After all, who says the magic has to end when you go to bed at the Disney hotel room at night?

Starting this year, the famed Hong Kong Disneyland launched its "Celebration in the Air" theme to celebrate five successful years in operation. Since the resort opened in September 2005, more than 25 million guests from the world over have visited a number that sure to increase by the end-2010 in the coming years with new attractions regularly opening.

This 2010, Hong Kong Disneyland proudly promises its new guests, dating "Flights of Fantasy Parade," borrowed Mattel finds from New York unveiled with the local accustoming room since series of dazzling costumes that are dazzling to every sense yet are still practical enough for performers in the air.

The parade will feature festive costumes, carnival-sung and dance sections, and of course, everyone's favorite Disney characters including Mickey Mouse and his friends.

"Hong Kong Disneyland Resort is an important part of Hong Kong as both the tourism industry and the community in the past 5 years," said Donald Tsang, chief executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

For the first time also, the resort opens its signature restaurant "Disney Bell Castle," illuminating its iconic façade and lighting it free, the Hong Kong teams up with Mickey to shower this entire resort with pixie dust, magnifying the magic for everyone. The attraction creates fantasy like no other, just like the ones you see in your favorite Disney cartoons.

To further deem up endeavours for the next attraction, a series of regional marketing efforts have begun, including television commercials, as well as a live ever Facebook promotion in Asian markets. The Resort also worked closely with airlines partners to set-up new-mouth joint promotions.

During the run of the "Celebration in the Air" theme, guests will be able to enjoy a more diversified shopping experience as the resort opens a new merchandise outlet, Iconic Street Boutique. It features there exclusive merchandise and collectible "Wishmaker" figurines as well as more than 200 new items featuring Tinker Bell, Sweetie Mickey, "Flights of Fantasy" and Tinker Bell Castle.

By combining the splendor of Asia's World City along with Disney's magic, the "Celebration in the Air" is sure to enhance Hong Kong's appeal as a premiere tourist destination, which will keep its visitors keep coming back for more.

"The 5,000 cast members, including me, would put our commitment to 5th anniversary name tags to show our commitment to delivering Hong Kong's world class hospitality," said director Ratu, the resort's managing director. "The 'Celebration in the Air' is one experience you wouldn't want to miss."

Sunday LIFESTYLE

THE LATE Tony Hidalgo (far right) with fellow Upsilonian Rolly Fernandez, for one pre-martial law Upsilon stage he colleagues Nestor Lit, Earnshaw and with Cristina on the steps of Quezon Hall, UP Diliman in the early 1970s

Upsilonians send off their respected brod with a shower of pink roses

By Elizabeth Lulu Lanuza
Correspondent

THE COLOR pink is not one I associate with a very macho organization like Upsilon Sigma Phi, the oldest fraternity in Asia, which turns 93 this year.

And yet, at the Sunday's farewell mass for famous "Tony" Hidalgo, writer, publisher, international civil servant and illustrious Upsilonian, each living brod (short for "brother") of his held a pink rose and solemnly placed it atop his coffin.

I was afraid the rites would be marked by blustery speeches, as it was for a rabid reason that "barkadas" or non-sister sorority members like myself refer to this fun's members as "Upsilon yabang," because some members are so full of themselves and seem to enjoy passing their heads in positions of influence and power.

Asked what it was like to live with an intellectual of Tony Hidalgo's caliber, his widow, writer Jing Puntoja-Hidalgo, replied in one word: "Tough!"

My fears were laid to rest that evening. The mes began with a simple roll call of Tony's fraternity brods mass from 1960. The living men answered with a clear, strong "Here," "Present" or "Aye." When Tony's followers was announced—here, there is a true down—was silence—until a burly man piped up that Tony could not respond because he was no longer with them; he had departed.

UPSILONIANS 10

FACULTY Dr. Lorna Laurel, Marlene Severo, Alice Lorenzo

HARVEST dancers, Alice Lorenzo, Fr Nolero, Portia De, Connie Lopez, Betty Dee

DR. Oscar Lopez, Ching Monteiola, Herwart Dee, Eduard De and Tina Gonzales

Friends throw a retirement party for Fr. Ben

By Ching Monteiola
Contributor

It was a fitting tribute to such an accomplished man

A FAREWELL PARTY was given jointly by all of us who love Fr. Benvenido Nolero or Fr. Ben, for all the successful and progressive programs he has brought to the Ateneo University. Fr. Ben has been president for the largest term, 18 years, and now he will retire.

There are many of us — actors of alumni, parents of students, students and graduates of this prominent university — and Fr. Ben certainly did us proud. He successfully led us to basketball championships and developed most of the sports programs. He also created an outstanding program for the long-term improvement of different departments as well as the development of the faculty and all facets of education.

This is enough reason for a memorable, sentimental goodbye to our beloved friend and mentor. Marini Prieto and I are staunch supporters of all his programs, and much

DULCE Fernandez

LOURDES Monteiola

respect and admiration for him was expressed at the end of the dinner. It was really a beautiful and fitting tribute to an accomplished man.

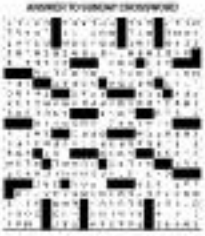
Fr. Ben was a Fulbright Area scholar in 1960-1967 and held a graduate assistantship at Stanford University, 1967-70. He received the Order des Palmes Academiques from the French government in 1981, and received his Doctor of Laws, honoris causa, from the University of the Philippines, 1992. He carries the rank of Officer in the National Order of Merit of the French Republic (Officier De L'ordre National Du Merite), 2001, and received a Gawad Gatpuno ng Lahi and a Carlos Palanca Memorial Award for Literature also in 2001. He is a Doctor of Science (Honoris Causa) from De La Salle University, 2004.

MARCO Prieto and Fr. Nolero

JPI Monteiola, Sonia Arranza, chief PCGG dean Andy Monteiola, Tori Benvenuto, Tina Gonzales, Hector Calzada

LIBERNA Pastilla and OTI anniversary Cristina Pastilla, Ching Monteiola, Fr. Nolero, Michael and Patricia Escaler, Robert Fernandez

ANSWERS TO SUNDAY CROSSWORD



LORNA Laurel, Leticia Molina

METROBANK Foundation president Chito Salvosa III, JPI president Gigi Monteiola, Fr. Nolero, Ching Monteiola, Central Bank Gov. Amando Tetangco, Anna Salvosa

Sunday Crossword

PREMIER CROSSWORD By Frank A. Longo

MYSTERY SISTERS

Should she leave an abusive husband and reunite with an old love?

EMILY'S POST

Emily A. Marcelo

After eight years of being his punching bag, do you honestly believe he will develop amnesia and forget your past?

DEAR IBS. Marcelo,

I am 37, married, with two young kids and living abroad.

When I was still single, I had a relationship with a co-worker who was pursuing an annulment case at that time. I fell in love with him enough to give myself to him. But people at work had no clue about his ongoing annulment since his wife would still show up and they would leave the facility together.

We were together for two years, but from the start of our relationship, we had this understanding that if someone serious-ly came along for me, he would let me free. So at one point, he promised he would wait for me even in our old age, and I would come back to him anytime, no questions asked.

After two years of waiting with his annulment still not granted, I met and married another guy. (His gut was aware of the gossip. He asked me if it was true, which I denied because I was afraid of losing him. My conscience was clear then when I married during him, I had ended my previous relationship.

His secret can stay hidden forever. He found out about it, we had an argument and he beat me physically. I took all the blows, asked for his forgiveness and pleaded for him to give our marriage an-other chance — which he did. He promised not to hurt me again.

But every time we'd have an argument, it would always lead to my lying about my previous relationship. He'd call me calling me "whore" or "mistress," bashing and pulling my hair. Even when I was seven months pregnant with our first child, I tried running away, but he found me at my friend's house, said sorry and again promised he would no longer lay his hands on me.

I applied for a job abroad, taking him and our son with me, hoping that a change of scenery would help him forget my past, heal from the pain and save our marriage. But it continued. For every heated argument or my refusal to have sex with him, I would always end up battered. He'd call me names and taunt and blame me for what I did to him — all those in front of our young son.

I am deeply in love again with that old boyfriend for the past five months, and have realized I still love him. He said he still loves me and he is still keeping his promise to me.

I've been faithful to my husband until this renewed communication with my ex. For several years, I endured in silence trying my best to save my marriage for the sake of our young children. But I am also afraid that for the rest of my life I'd be in fear of my husband's wrath. He can neither forget nor forgive me for denying my previous relationship, and I don't know if he will ever be able to accept my past.

After eight years of marriage and abuse, I am thinking of divorcing my husband and maybe give myself a chance to start a relationship back in the Philippines with someone who, after all these years, has waited for me and is willing to take me back and my kids willingly and lovingly. Am I being selfish?

–Ahmed Wife

So you feel about your relationship with a married man. Big deal! That was before you even met him! Who he himself a life-white virgin when you two hooked up?

Why have you considered such instability when his anger is being directed at something that happened at that time of your life when it was every-one of his business? Or was not even in the picture yet? Why did you allow yourself to be demeaned by a bi-sexual who transforms into the monster Mr. Hyde with re-warning?

Such brutality is horrid left in the wild. Violence among human beings is non-negotiable. Something is definitely wrong with him and, unless he gets help soon, he will only get worse.

You should have separated your-selves the first time that evil hand of his came across your face and touched your skin. You should have filed a complaint against him, considering that law enforcers where you are, are taught how to handle domestic violence.

There is a very fine line that separates battery from murder. Remember? Or language? Isn't this just rage that is waiting to explode? How much pain and injury is possible? The phrase "I will kill you" is oftentimes as much a joke as a wish! A flippant remark that can go awry.

The fact that you allowed your husband to strike you that very first time not only flung the doors to his dark side wide open, it also gave him the license to do it again and again and again, while fattening your e-fforts in your arguments. His ac-quiescence to your hopelessly sensible with every single blow. After eight years of being his punching bag, do you honestly believe he will develop amnesia and forget your past?

You shouldn't give excuses for di-vorcing him with such gobbledygook as giving yourself and your kids another chance at life. Of finding love again with that boyfriend from your past. The fact that you're walking a tightrope with no safety net every time you quarrel with him, should give you a reason for pause.

You are not saving a marriage here — you are saving your life!

E-mail emarcelo@inq.com.ph. SUBJECT: LIFESTYLE

Upsilonians send off their respected brod with a shower of pink roses

From page D1

The eulogies by writers Elvira Santos, Ricardo "Dick" Maloy, and retired diplomat Oscar Salemanda were short, poignant and revealed the deceased's personality.

Elbiro recalled how Tony brought him and other friends to the University of Santo Tomas campus where he was pairing court to a young lovely named Cristina "Jing" Pantoja. Her office was inside an old, imposing building with a Latin inscription carved on the façade.

Elbiro bragged that he understood Latin and volunteered this translation of the aphorism: "Abeed stay awhile dere is [Meaning is forbidden here]." Tony was flushed with embarrassment at his bad.

Obviously, he was embarrassed before the woman he was courting and who would eventually become his wife. For a time, he muddled Elbiro because of the incident.

He also remembered a time when his play was severely criticized. He wrote as Tony for months of unsolicited letters he suffered from writer's block. Tony will have opening another writers than writers are like consumers unwilling in the closet at night. Jing encouraging at times, but the outcome ignores them and keeps moving. Consoled, Elbiro proceeded to write another play.

Dick asked Jing if her Thomasian education clashed with Tony's more secular background. She wondered what it was like to live with an intellectual as Tony's soldier. In a word, the widow replied, "Tough!"

Oscar recalled surviving Tony during his application period to the University. The more senior lord seated "now-Oscar" was pointed to the works of existentialist writer Albert Camus. They discussed his works, thus quoting the aeroplayer a possible rough understanding which was part of initiation rites.

Later, Oscar and Tony became fast friends, rendezvousing and discussing books. Among the more memorable discussions were the novel by a philosophy grounded on Philippine realities to counteract the leftist ideology that was then sweeping the country in the late '60s. Both were sympathetic to the movement for social change. Each went on to contribute his bit in their sphere of influence.

At the end of the rites, the pile of pink roses was heralded up and handed over to a dry eyed, serene looking Jing. In her brief response, she said she realized that marrying an Upsilonian came with a package deal. She had to embrace and accept the brods, too.

The Suerga-Baldga love story is evident in Jing's collection of essays where Tony figures as a steadfast, dependable partner and literary equal. Genuinely in-in the love of her life. He brought his scattered brod with and then family to live in politically volatile countries in the line of work as a ranking officer of United. Tony loved for some time in countries like Lebanon and Yemen. For a writer like Jing, these experiences and adventures are perpetual fair materials.

Under Tony—he lived long enough to celebrate his golden year as an Upsilonian last year. And a week and a day before Valentine's, his heart went him off with dozens of pink roses.

I assure details of a more romantic, sentimentally male gesture than that.

FAMILY of writers

La Manille

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Milestones

DATUON-DACANAY

Lendy Ducanay, daughter of Teofilo and **Sofina Ducanay**, wed Jay-R Datuon, son of **Fedelino** and **Clarita** Datuon, on Feb. 19 at the Chapel of Transfiguration, Calatagan, Batangas.

Eric Pineda designed the bride's gown in coordinated satin.

Reception was held at the Sylvanis Ridge Hotel, Tagaytay, Cavite.

GADTEE PALABAY

Meghan F. Gadtee, sportswriter of Manila Bulletin, exchanged wedding vows with Lieuke S. Palabay, a licensed broker at 1st Paragon Logistics Int'l, Inc., last Jan. 22 at Cara Manila, Plaza San Luis Intramuros, Manila. Officiating the nuptials were Patricia Lee Gamuza and Ariel Esguerra. Photo shows the couple with principal sponsors (from left) Phil. Olympic committee's Joey Romasanta; fairfleet Center owner Mikee Romero; former PBA chair Joaquin 'Bobby' Arevalo; Rotary Angping; Ed Tiamzon, Bureau of Customs commissioner Lito Alvarez; Marinette Mondragon, Manila Bulletin sports editor Ding Elumbre; Sunstar Metro coach Siong Gobio.

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True stories of love, actually

"SERENDIPITY. I got gossiping with the nuns of the world. I think about the periods gate at Heathrow Airport. General opinion's starting to make me think we live in a world of limited and good, but I don't see that. It seems to me that love is everywhere. Often, it's not particularly dignified or newsworthy, but it's always there. Authors and sons, mothers and daughters, husbands and wives, boyfriends, girlfriends, old friends. When the planes hit the Twin Towers, as far as I know, none of the phone calls from the people on board were messages of hate or revenge...they were all messages of love. If you look for it, I've got a smoking suspicion ... love is really all around." —From the movie "Love Actually"

I'd say that our year spent with a small group of girlfriends, sitting at the foot of a much revered and well-loved nun—a Mary Knoll sister who was our grade school principal back in the mid-'70s.

One of the girls and I went to the same grade school and high school, but we had never spoken a word to each other back then. The other girl I met through an ex-boyfriend. So ... two women in their 30s who were in different stages of separation.

We listened intently to our veteran mentor talk about "growing through the seasons of life," a story she tells a lot at this point.

After her talk, we made some dates to reconnect over lunch. The word reminds it from the Italian language of Sanskrit, loosely translated, it means circle—in this case, the circle of life, an illustration of the events that influence us and brought us to where we were. And as the next half hour was spent drawing on napkins from our past.

Martial law survivor

A friend shared how she and her family survived her dad's stint as a martial law detainee during the Marcos era from the early '80s until a few months before Cebu. My friend spoke about her pain, but also about how God remained so faithful to her family by providing his cheer. Her dad, a bright man and an astute businessman, had invested well.

"Our treasurers began to run out, just shortly before dad was finally released," she said. "And the manner of his release was a miracle in itself because Marcos was deathly sick and was releasing any dead."

Another friend spoke of her healing after a long arduous journey. It's the early '90s, her parents were murdered, and in this day the killer is at large. Having come from prominent families (like the killer's), they had to leave their homes province and settle elsewhere.

It was when she had to close for 30 years, one that has affected her many relationships.

But there she was that morning, finally healed, and at home in her own skin, able to talk about her profound sadness because, after many miracles in the last couple of years, she had finally found her peace.

War scars

Sister Marlene, our retreat master, was hooked next by the many sad and harrowing stories of each woman's story and shared one of her own. She said she was around 15 or 16 years old, the day the Americans came to liberate Manila.

The Japanese forces were retreating and killing people. She and her family were caught in the battle on Taft Avenue and were running away when her older sister got shot in the leg and could not move.

"My mother opted to stay with her and left her baby, knowing full well the danger that was there," she said, and looking at us, added, "she must have been just about your age at that time. Imagine that."

It was an image, she said, that she carried for years and one that gave her courage.

Shortly after, she said, a GI came with a jeep by, they were able to save her sister by tying a tourniquet on her leg to stop the bleeding. However, when they reached UST, they had to amputate her leg because gangrene had set in.

That night, she said, grew up healthy and led a full, productive life, and raised six beautiful children.

Each of us then his or her journey and, as M. Scott Peck wrote in "The Road Less Travelled," it is our accustom to refer to the journey as a constant succession of momentary experiences. "We are, whether we like it or not, flawed human beings, and perfection will come only when we meet our Maker.

Sister Marlene shared a reading by Jesuit Philip Blake, who in a piece titled "Learning to Bless the Journey" wrote about an elastic reverse type of religion—"It was as if I were, figuratively heaven running through water, crawling through mire, climbing up walls, sliding down ropes, trying to catch up, doing things for God, but always being in the wrong place. The consequences of all this, of course, was guilt and bad feelings about myself, not at all an uncommon experience among Christians."

Agonies, resurrections

Every journey will have, Father Blake writes, its agonies and resurrections.

In the same essay, he quotes Paul Nash, S.J.—"Every human does experiences of God do not exempt a person from entering into his or her desert and wandering in it for years."

For many of us that morning, the desert of our lives have been long and endless, but we were able to find many springs to refresh ourselves by.

E-mail the author at sallybabao@gmail.com

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Milestones

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CAGADAS-CERPORAL

Priscilla Cagadas and Adelyn Cerporal were married last Jan. 15 at the Sto. Domingo Church, with a reception at the Quezon City Sports Club. Mother of the groom **Teresita Galang vda. de Cagadas** flew in from New Jersey especially for the occasion. From left to right: parents of the bride, **Salvador** and **Salvacion Cerporal**; the bride **Adelyn Cerporal**, the groom **Priscilla Cagadas**; mother of the groom Teresita Galang vda. de Cagadas and Christian Cagadas.

VILA-GAYETA

Melanie Gayeta, daughter of Antonio and Amelia Gayeta, married Rev. Christian Vila, son of Reynaldo and Amorita Vila, on Feb. 5 at the Saint Michael Parish Church, Imusot, Cavite. A grand reception was held at the Bali Garden, Coastal Road Extension, Brgy. Longos, Bacoor, Cavite. The gold and chocolate-brown themed event was coordinated by event specialist Alice Sanidad of Events Plus.

Melanie wore a princess-cut wedding gown made of Mikado silk with embellishments of Swarovski crystals and Japanese cut beads.

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IN THIS ISSUE
■ No, I didn't
Photoshop Sharon /F1

Sunday LIFESTYLE

Time with the hubby on Bora for V-Day

The only guy I know who still swims with Speedo trunks is my husband Dennis!

TESSA!
Tessa Prieto-Valdes

MY DEEP ROOTED love for the sea always brings me back to the beach and to the beautiful marine underworld. So, to celebrate a very romantic and memorable Valentine's Day this year, I arranged for my hubby **Dennis** and I to have a quick getaway to the world-famous, pristine sands of Boracay Island.

I guess neither of us wanted a reenactment like last year; we cannot even remember most what we did.

If one wants to fall in love again or simply wants to stay in love, a perfect solution is a weekend sojourn at Discovery Shores. One of Boracay's best hotels, Discovery is truly a place where love and service from the heart are present all day long.

Discovery Shores' management gave all out to provide perfect service for their guests. They ensure that all the ingredients for the ultimate romantic holiday are provided, and this is why the hotel remains at the top of everyone's Boracay wish list. They have been making beautiful memories for hundreds of couples since they opened more than four years ago.

Jun Parreno, general manager of Discovery Shores, had asked me months ago to spend Valentine's with them, but our schedules didn't meet until the day before. Thank goodness for **Meg Cabrera** of Asian, who efficiently arranged our overnight trip to the island. It's to silly guess when guys like these go above and beyond the call of duty for their guests.

Original skin dude

Dennis and I took the early morning flight on one of Asian's 19 seaters. In the terminal, we chanced with Asian endorser and fire-original skin dude **Marc Nelson**. He was off to Boracay to spend his birthday doing some kite surfing and B&B. There was also some mention of a girl somewhere in the conversation, but I forgot her name.

It's great to be in love. Love is real, but just like anything worth having, love needs time, commitment and a whole lot of human sacrifice and compromise are all part of the game. Dennis has learned through the years to perfect that part of the game.

I, on the other hand, have perfected the art of keeping the romantic spice alive. With the help of Jun and his team, we were showered with love this Valentine's. With all the personalized touches in the room, from having our names embroidered on the pillows, to themed photos in our room, to dinner on the beach next to our own private sandcastle, all we could say was "Wow!"

Being on a beach makes me so conscious of my figure. There is no way to disguise unwanted fat. As we get older, everything starts to slow down, so I have been doubling up with my running training and Bikram yoga classes.

One of my yoga friends, **Joji Muhlenz**, has moved to Boracay to look over her popular Pinatubo Bar and Grill, next to D'Mall in Station 2. We enjoyed a deliciously fresh seafood lunch.

New yoga studio

I'm so glad I learned about Pinatubo, which Joji told me about during the blessing of the hippest and hottest yoga center in town, Yoget. Joji is one of the investors in this new yoga studio in The Fort.

Yoget offers 20 classes a week, includ-

YOGA >>

WEEKHALE IO and cookie by Discovery Shores for the Sea Princess and Sea Pirate

TOUR: Manila Ace Leader, Miriam Quiambao, Mall Salang, Rosas Cruz, Sea Princess and Dina Salang

GLOBAL Philippines CEO Lucio Pitangan, Glenda Atkinson, Merlin Figueroa, Sandra Maddox and Jamie Lampe, brand manager for Fragrance Business

KBLIS passengers Marc Nelson and Dennis Valdez

Time with the hubby on Bora for V-Day

Story page 2

LOVEBIRDS: Alden seeing ceremony at Hennan Caticlan Midnight Market

MR. AND MRS. Sea Princess, Photo Rosario, Kristel San Diego and Eli Zabal

EXCLUSIVE! Sharon Cuneta and Pandan Star and Gold owner Jeff Nelson

YOGA+ studio opening party at The Fort with yoga teachers and students

LOVELY ladies Cecilia Palmos and her mom Benita Caldron

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Weekend market

Wedding market

Ok lugi in Palau

SPEEDO Spring-Summer collection for 2011

PHILIPPINE Aquatic Sports Association's Mark Joseph Jalandoni's Harry Singh and Manish Malhotra, Pentland Group PLC's Ian Brown and James Hancock

TRAVEL Specialist Philippines VP-Operations Manish Malhotra, Speedo international regional business development manager for Asia Pacific Harry Singh, Speedo Philippines VP-Marketing Jeff Nelson Malhotra, Speedo Philippines president Chander Malhotra, Pentland Group PLC executive director and general counsel Ian Brown, Speedo Philippines sales and marketing manager Hayden Valentino and Pentland Group PLC head of security James Hancock

Singapore, Malaysia through Cebu eyes

Silkair treats Cebu media to the sounds and sights of the Lion City and Penang

Jaime Hernandez

PUB TWO decades now as the hotbed as international airport. That makes Cebu a gateway for the many tourists who come to very numerous places. For Cebuanos and many in the rest of the Visayas and Mindanao the airport provides opportunities for travel to near and far destinations.

One of the first airlines to fly in and out of Cebu was Singapore Airlines. Their operations were taken over by their regional subsidiary, Silkair, in June 2002. Through the years aircraft has been upgraded so as to give passengers comfortable and impersonal services.

Silkair's country manager (based in Cebu) Ajish Henry Morris recently organized a local-invitation trip for Cebu media to visit Singapore and Malaysia. Invited to join were Hella Toral and Mike Jaymo of Star, Mayen Tee and Henry Lamp of The Freeman, Pia Echevarria of Live magazine, and a TV crew from ABS-CBN Cebu: Jallerson Gumas-an, Renee Balbuena and Nicole Balmonte.

I was also included, and I gratefully accepted. In a way I am doubled because I used a cane to help me walk.

"That's the point; we can take care of you," said Mr. Morris. He was with us up to Singapore. For the rest of the tour we were in the capable hands of Allen Andrei Soares from the Silkair Cebu staff.

We left Cebu at 1:30 p.m., postponed on account of rains all the way to Singapore. There we had a couple of hours to stroll through the orchid-filled Changi airport to change currency, browse through the shops and stretch our legs.

The Silkair flight to Penang was filled with holiday revelers. We arrived there at 8 p.m., welcomed by Ashley Ramsay of Nasa Travel which took care of us during our entire sojourn in Malaysia. We met Ramsay, our guide in Penang, most sensible and knowledgeable.

Penang is a big industry in Penang, supported by its population of 1.6 million. Penang's name is derived from the local term for betel nut. The island of Penang was colonized by the British with Sir Francis Light establishing a settlement there in 1786. We drove into its capital, George Town, straight to check-in at Hotel.

Sun How Lin, the pretty and amiable communications manager, welcomed us and later joined us for dinner. It was across the street in a restaurant offering Indian cuisine. The first course of chocolate assured us the place's popularity and authenticity. Except for a few Cebuanisms, we were the only out of country.

Day 2 of the trip was our first full day in Penang. In the morning some us took trishaw rides to see the old section of the city with its narrow streets and quaint architecture. Later, on a motorcoach, we saw more sights and made more stops.

There was Fort Cornwallis, named by Sir Francis Light over what once was a swamp. Most of the cannons are on the ramparts.

We visited a clan jetty where Chinese settlers built their homes on stilts jutting far into the sea. Their descendants still live in them. In between houses and shrines are paths covered with wooden planks, wide enough even for motorcycles to pass, one way.

There are more than 600 structures from the past all over Penang for which reason it has earned a citation as a World Heritage Site from Unesco. There are impressive government buildings, residences big or small, churches, mosques, and Buddhist temples, two of which we visited. One is Thai, with a leaning Buddha. The other is Burmese with a tall statue glistening with gold leaf.

A visit to a shop was to Tony white coffee and all manner of oils and lotions made from nutmeg. We did not linger long as we were expected at the Nasa Talipot Hotel by the beach for lunch and an inspection tour. Every room has a view, and the tropical landscaping pool is just a few steps away from the door.

Our hosts were the hotel's manager Fredrik Tee and Jack Hong, the sales manager. They treated us to a continental lunch, very well prepared. The chocolate puddings served with the cold fruit were specially made by the chef, Ms. Ye relatives.

It was early afternoon when we checked in at the Hard Rock Hotel. The marketing communications manager Elias Tan gave us a whole tour of the place. Focal points are the large pool and the nearby beach. The rooms are quite luxurious and some have access to the pool.

All our three are glass cases with some 100 items of memorabilia from the world's top rock stars. The memorabilia lounge on the ninth floor is dubbed The Ring. It makes real reverence from Elvis Presley. There are photos of him on the walls.

Visitors can watch a movie while others took a dip in the pool where three mangers, real splashing and gleeful laughter. Before 7 p.m. we were all at the lobby on the front lawn waiting for photos, and waiting for the bus to bring us to the Flamingo Hotel, also by the beach.

There were bunches of white cattleya orchids blooming at the foyer of the Flamingo. Sales executive Joann Teoh met us and showed us the various guest rooms. Everyone went ah and oh at the presidential suite. It has the amenities of a luxurious guest house and a real garden big enough to host a party for a hundred. When a view of sea and sky specially on a full moon night such as the time we visited.

After dinner at the Cafe Flamingo we were driven back to the Hard Rock Hotel. There all us got off before getting three at time to a motorcade of motorcycles with eight marked mufti. Lots of shoppers were hoping my bargain goods; but of course, you have to haggle.

On Day 3 we had to get up early since we had to leave at 8 a.m. I was down at the lobby with Mayen at 6:30 a.m. and the motor was turned on the rock music full blast. Right in the morning is relatively early for Penang and so along the way to the bus terminal we saw us always swinging from the waves, even crossing the road.

A double decker bus would take us to mainland Malaysia across the 13.5 km Penang Bridge. On the other side, there was a slight delay due to a worker check on buses and other transport. We also made a stop over to have a light lunch, and tour the locale, another name for what others call the "restroom." It would take us a total of 4 hrs and a half hours to get to Kuala Lumpur.

To be continued.

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SUCCESS Sun*Star Governor Of Cebuano, Tourism Director Mercy Lee, the Governor and MMTC VP overlooking Davao at last year's NLEX-travel fair. Turn on on March 2011, also NLEX Outdoor Travel Fair is set for March 24-26 at NLEX Mall Balagtas, Bulacan, Nov. 25.

Travel Briefs

Go north this 2011 with the NLEX Outdoor Travel Fair

MANILA, 9/2011 (Subways Corporation, Northern Mindanao and Mactan (TIMAS) Philippines, and the North Philippines Visitors Bureau, together with Philippine Hotel, the Department of Tourism, and the Tourism Infrastructure Enterprise) are featuring (Travel) will stage the third NLEX Outdoor Travel Fair "Go north on Norte," on March 23-25 at Mall Balagtas, Bulacan (NLEX Km 32), from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

The 2011 one-stop travel bazaar will highlights, with the guaranteed attendance of top local corporate big-wig, travel agents, and tourism officials. Also on hand will be provincial presentations by participating municipalities and resorts.

Also scheduled is a number of event-stage, incentive, conventions and events with big consumer appearances from the local celebrities, and the Miss Universe Philippines Queenslee Core is also scheduled to exhibit the travel fair's opening ceremony.

Early confirmed participants for the travel fair (see here: Philippine Airlines, the Philippine Tourism, Commission, Boracay Pergong and the Davao City Tourism Office. Booths for exhibitors are still available, and interested parties may call Alice Ann Mendoza at tel. 3202-7021 and 3202-7000 or the Manila North Tollways Corporation marketing department at tel. 4788-2222.

Batanes promo

South Seas Island Airlines (South) offers a long over-take over Batanes roundtrip promo, and up to 70 percent off on Boracay. Dubbed as the "2011 Travel Time Buyer," ongoing until Feb. 28 at the SMX Convention Center, SM Mall of Asia, Pasay. Travellers can purchase Batanes tickets for low at only P18,500 and Boracay one-way ticket at P1,000 all to valid for travel from March 1-Oct. 31. Limited seats only. Boracay one-way tickets are also at all special rates for the Seair Leisure Escape Packages inclusive of three day-two night accommodation at partner hotels, daily breakfast and round-trip airfare for as low as P4,877 per person, valid June 1-Oct. 31. Special peak season promo rates are for as low as P8,282 per person for travel on March 1-June 5. Seair offers the fastest flights to Boracay at just 55 minutes. It is the airline's newest ruled airline, and has been about three million passengers in local destinations. Customer flight inquiries and SMS: 908-7300 for passengers. Join Seair Facebook fan page at www.facebook.com/seairph.

Call Boracay Garden Resort's Manila Booking Office at tel. 3202-1111 or e-mail manila.reservations@boracaygarden.com.ph.

Tour expo

Hilland Images joins the Travel Tour Expo, at the SMX Convention Center in Pasay City and Boracay. The event, organized by the Philippine Travel Agencies Association, is expected to attract more than 80,000 visitors from around the country.

Travorld's leading airline for low-cost one-day tours, Hilland Images will showcase its five-star lodging and general packages and services and promote its home, the Hilland, as an ideal leisure and business travel destination.

Hilland's country manager for the Philippines Roberto Halcon urges visitors to the airline's booth at the expo not to expect to learn about attractive offers, and only to learn of airlines but also lodging and leisure activities in the Hilland beyond.

Hilland Images has designated 2011 as "the year still in Hilland" and has developed an innovative destination marketing campaign called "Travorld to Go (Hilland)" to promote the area's available. Designed to enhance the Hilland's place as a top tourist and MICE destination, Hilland will unveil the campaign in the Philippines at the expo.

Workshop, exhibit and shows

Ballet summer workshop

The Ballet Manila School, the educational arm of the country's premiere classical ballet company, is gearing up for its annual summer workshop which will start on April 5. Classes being offered include study classes of ballet technique taught by Bienvenido "Buddy" Bustillo (Level 1A, Level 1B, Level 2 and Level 3; Level 2 has Beginner Pointe class; Level 3 has Variation and Pointe Class and Pas de Deux or Trio Pointe).

Auditions for half and full scholarships will be held on March 5-6. Registration will begin at 10a.m., while the auditioning proper will be held from 12 noon-1 p.m. There is a registration fee of P300. Applicants who do not qualify for scholarship may enroll as regular paying students for the workshop.

The workshop will culminate in a short recital titled "Dust Dance," to be presented on May 21-22 at the Aliw Theater. This year's recital will feature "The Four Seasons" and a concert of different classical and contemporary pieces. Call 4995282 and 8250967, visit www.balletmanila.ph or email to: bs@balletmanila.ph.

Group exhibit at Bencab Museum

The 25th issue in International Artists' Open House at Bencab Museum at Km. 6, Asin Road, Tuba, Benguet. Featured artists are Jenlino Mislang, Randy Arocena, Bencab, Benedicto Cabrera, Bonna Logsdon, Nick Hernandez, Nap Pangilinan, Wawi Navarroza, Raquel Chiongbian and Susan Fetalvero Pinoso. Call (063) (0)74 554 or www.bencabmuseum.org.

Arts month in CEU

Centro Escolar University celebrates Arts Month this February with cultural presentations, activities, and a grand concert presented by the CEU Performance Committee on Culture and the Arts on Feb. 21-24.

On Mon., Cristina B. Palabrica, CEU president, who organized the PCCA, leads the celebration which starts with cultural presentations of the Culture Section of the University of the Islands of the Republic of Irish-Manila to be held at the CEU Lihuela Ruffino Auditorium on Feb. 21.

On Feb. 22, PCCA opens at the Student Activity Center, 3:30 p.m., at its new ng Lahing Pilipino Exhibit, set by Palabrica and Jeremiah Bueno Tenebra. Dean of the CEU School of Education, Liberty Ang, Music and Social Work, Jed Cortes, E. Glee, new president of the student affairs Camille Lopez, renowned vocalist and a faculty member of the CEU Conservatory of Music, perform as the opening act of the Tomasino Lahing Filipino. In behalf of the second floor lobby of the CEU Student Activity Center, on Feb. 23.

Also on Feb. 23, the CEU Conservatory of Music presents a Tribute Trio, his honor at the CEU Rotunda Lobby at 2 p.m., featuring Faustino Perez, Fernando Mojica, Mario Echigoyen, Theadia Cortez, Jason Reis, and selected Music students, with Benjamin Reyes as co-presenting artist.

A grand concert caps the PCCA Arts Month celebration on Feb. 24, featuring the CEU Philippine Dance Troupe, Rotary Centro Escolar, CEU Concert Band, and CEU Conservatory of Music Chorus.

'Orosman at Zafira' at MOA Center Stage

Francisco Balagtas' "Orosman at Zafira," directed by Eleazar Gordon for Bulaang UP, starring Mario Ponce, Jay Gonzaga, Delphine Buenaventura, Jean-Judith Javier, Red Constantino, ongoing until Feb. 26 at the MOA Mall of Asia Center Stage. Call 0917. 8207846 (Gerardo Mapanao), 8912-4022736/8911-8427346/0922-8427346 (Cedric Francia) or e-mail dzee@yahoo.com.

'Joy Luck Club' on stage

Repertory Philippines' "The Joy Luck Club," directed by Bernie Joan Ismael and Rechelle Ann Saavedra, closing performance today, Feb. 20, 3:00p.m., at Onstage Theater, G/F, Greenhills 1 Mall, Wilkins. Call 57 56000 and or 14181, e-mail info@repertory.philippines.com, or call Ticketnet at 891 9999 or visit www.ticketnet.com.ph.

'ZsaZsa Zaturnnah' musical at CCP

Tanghalang Pilipino's "ZsaZsa Zaturnnah Za Musikal... Vada Bida A Vengalenol," starring Eula Valdez, Pinky Amador and Soliz Mercado, directed by Chris Millado, ongoing until March 13 at CCP Little Theater. Call 8321784, 8323861, 8321133 local 1037/1621 or 8919999.

'Amphitryon' by Dulaang UP

Dulaang UP's "Amphitryon," directed by Jose Estrella, ongoing until March 6 at the Wilfrido Ma. Guerrero Theater, U.P. Palma Hall, UP Diliman, Quezon City. Call 8817-1500/187, 8261380/8818500 local 3449 or 4201846.

'Care Divas' at PETA Theater

PETA's "Care Divas," directed by Maribel Legarda, with music and lyrics by Vince De Jesus, Stan Melvin Lee, Fidel Oliver, Vince de Jesus, Mike Salmonson, Ongoing at the PETA Theater Center until March 13. Call 7258244, 4130831 or 0917-8662233, e-mail petatheater@gmail.com.

'Rent' in RCBC

The Writerkids Theatrical revue of Jonathan Larsen's "Rent," ongoing until March 6 at Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, RCBC Plaza, Ayala Corner Gil, Gil Puyat Avenue, Makati City, starring Ikee Magtanggol, Shimie Sucro-Solis, directed by Robbie Guevara. Call 5579800, 0917 TEL 8911-1545555 or 5919999, or visit www.RentKidsMakati.com.

IN THIS ISSUE
By 2030, we'd need two earths /C3

Sunday LIFESTYLE

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No, I didn't Photoshop Sharon

By Raymund Isaac
Lifestyle

IT TOOK me five revisions, two sleepless nights and a missed layout deadline, trying to decide whether or not to write this article.

With the anniversary sun rounding the billboard and the number of texts, tweets and Facebook messages I have received since it went up on Edsa, tongues have not stopped wagging, and reeds of doubt are all being plowed.

The image in question is Sharon Cuneta's billboard for Marie France. So many mega-

I am not putting down people who love Photoshop. I am just worried that the digital world has convinced most people that Photoshop is the end-all and be-all of things

tive weeks ago have been on about Sharon's weight loss. As the billboard's photographer, I am concerned because someone has actually accused me of the crime of doing major Photoshop work on Sharon Cuneta to sell a service that doesn't work.

Let's be clear about this, as early as now. Although I shot this billboard, I was neither paid nor coerced to write this to defend the company or Sharon. I found it fitting that people have both sides of the story and decide for themselves whether or not the image in question merits so much attention.

Accused

Normally I would have let the issue go, as I have been accused in some cases of using Photoshop to make my image beautiful, even if, in fact, only simple photography techniques have been applied. But as soon as I heard that a celebrity and a group were out to take the billboard down because of the lack of truth in advertising, I realized I must air my side.

First and foremost, all billboards must be approved by the Advertising Standard Council (ASC). It's a regulatory board all advertisers have to go through before they can put up a billboard. They study whether or not the material submissions the product claims. The ASC has given Marie France the go ahead—proof that the claims are factual. So, will anyone overthrow claim of their wrist? Apparently not. As of this writing, no one has filed a formal complaint against the billboard.

In addition to this big to-do, an entire billboard of same has also come into existence. Eva Zee has produced a perfume line for Sharon. It may not be as controversial as the Marie France billboard, but it too has raised eyebrows for allegedly being merely Photoshopped.

Truth be told, the only Photoshop done was to clean up unwanted elements in the photograph that would distract the viewers, as what was done for the Marie France billboard.

If I had wanted to optimize Photoshop the image, trust me—I would have done more. But to this day and age of digital photography, we seldom see an image that is 0 real, if it has proper lighting, and it has received the magic of Photoshop.

I think what bothers me most, is, why are all of these happening to Sharon's billboards? All this brouhaha sends out a bad message.

First, it questions if Sharon Cuneta cannot, indeed, lose weight. Medical records show that she did, and at the very least, she deserves the benefit of the doubt.

Second, it shows that we do not respect authority. The ASC is a respectable board of individuals who go out of their way, beyond their regular jobs, to protect the interest of consumers. If we can't trust them, who can we trust? Others check their website for more info.)

Third, it tells me how the public views photography. I am not against digital photography or Photoshop, but it appears that Photoshop rules the field of photography in this country. Photography is not Photoshop, and Photoshop is not photography. Photoshop is merely a tool of photography.

Raw images

In fact, if a photographer or model has to apply for a job in the US or Europe, the client will always require the raw images, not the digitized images. Oh, don't get me started with the pothole of retouched images. Amateur distressing that will take the whole day.

When I teach budding photographers in my lectures, they seem surprised when I demonstrate a technique that appears to be Photoshop, but was actually done on camera.

MG, LTS

Tessa's Closet goes to MOA

THE SUBWEEK mall crawl-drawer of December 2010—Tessa's Closet for a Cause—goes to the SM Mall of Asia this February.

Last Chinese New Year, a mini fashion show was held at MOA featuring the exquisitely crafted gowns of Team Priscy-Valdez, which Valdez has worn through the years. Sponsored by SM, Saatchi and Saatchi Lifestyle, the exhibit/show was a benefit ...a silent auction was a component—the proceeds and SM donation of which would go to Valdez' chosen charity. (Those interested to view Valdez' gowns may make an appointment via email at marketing@tgpcs.com.)

The models...all prize to fit into Valdez' gowns—were handpicked by TESSA!!!

HUGS! is the show "Tessa's Closet for a Cause" wears Beatrix's 'The Lady' Collection.

MODEL with alms bowl, Mandalay, Myanmar

Balloon ride over Bagan, photo by Bernadine Sy

I found peace in Burma —with the perfect guide

We were led by Burmese designer Wynn Wynn Ong, a woman whose love for her native land never diminished—and whose stories were more interesting than Lonely Planet

WYNN Wynn Ong at the Teak Palace, Mandalay, Myanmar

Text and photos by John L. Silva
Contributor

WHEN I WAS a teenager in the '60s, my knowledge of Burma (Myanmar) was through U Thant, the United Nations's secretary general for three whole decades, a peacemaker who was a powerful role model.

Later, when I began collecting vintage photographs, Burma would be visually delightful through the eyes of Felice Beato, an Italian-British photographer who traveled throughout Asia, eventually settling in Rangoon (Yangon) in 1886. Through Beato, I recorded in my mind images of resplendently dressed princes as well as commoners and spires interlaced in the sky.

I traveled in that country recently with a Burmese woman, Wynn Wynn Ong, jewelry designer and philanthropist married to a Filipino, and a long-time resident of the Philippines.

Family members in Burma called her home, and in just a few weeks, friends gathered to follow her there.

Burma was of great interest to me, and I predicted Wynn Wynn to take me along on an opportunity meet.

MODELS Nandini, author; Thea Garcia, Wynn Wynn Ong, Miss Ramona, Bernadine Sy, Merle Ong, Gianna Mendiola, Ericson Garcia

Disconnected

The flight from Bangkok to Rangoon is just about an hour, but the difference in ambiance is palpable. The Myanmar Airlines terminal at Don Muang, old and rundown, but oozes one-down-humor gentleness, the whole scene becomes totally disconnected.

The porters carrying our luggage were dressed from the waist in their longyis, like our sarongs. The security guards were genial in a cotton coloa, with a variety of designs. Globalization may have imposed a homogenized jeans and T-shirt culture throughout the world, but not in Myanmar.

For more days, we pass out of our bus windows or to walk. Each time we're in encounters a strongly held culture. Women in to fashion: building blocks shell on their heads; men with red tooth-chewing betel nut; tribal females in rapplerdress below natural desires; barefoot monks in crimson robes as the eyes could see, holding alms bowls, making the romantic wanderer offering some semblance of self-sufficiency in entrepreneurial spirit.

Does one considered Dr. Livingstone, which travelers have taken since the 19th century. From Rangoon we flew north to Bagan to see hundreds of lofty temples from a balloon and take a tour on four-ride on the bewitchy River.

Then we flew northeast to Mandalay, site of the original kingdom north to ongoing (but still intact. Then northeast to Inle Lake, an enchanting eco-tourist site and home to the Shan and other minority tribal groups. Then finally back to Rangoon, capped by the imposing Shwedagon Pagoda and weather-beaten colonial architecture.

The Lonely Planet Guide was quite helpful, but this trip was enhanced significantly by Wynn Wynn's ongoing stories and anecdotes. We were led by a gracious whose love for her native land never diminished and whose stories were more interesting than Lonely Planet.

BUDDHA images, Amarapura Village, Temples, Bagan, Myanmar

CITYSCAPE, Yangon, Dusit (1920s) the Oriental Electric cycle

RELICS of Mandalay, taken by Felice Beato (c. 1887)

Walking arched through dark passageways, I felt disoriented in time: I was in mid-age now, like most of my contemporaries on this trip. My lives had bound less, our lot better than most. But in our autumnal years, we're slowly, quietly and unconsciously been burdened by sadness and tragedies, the passing of friends and loved ones, growing ailments and the reckoning of our own lives.

The guide entered a teaching from Buddha which—mixed me: Life is transitory; from the minute one is born, suffering is omnipresent throughout life.

Then surprisingly, my compassionate mood up in a balloon in relation to gigthrough the mist. Like a single billboard carried their view throughout.

There are all boarded in a motorized boat for a sunset rendezvous on the Irrawaddy. We shrugged slowly upstream past natives in evening silhouettes and dugouts even more outlines in the dying light. The engine stilled, and the quiet overcame us save for a pulsating fish.

Kipling's Mandalay

Mandalay would be the historical nexus during of the trip. Rudyard Kipling, a stringently colonial Anglophile promoted, and the former kingdom is a city.

"Come you back to Mandalay,
Where the old flotilla lies;
Can't you 'ear their paddles drumlin'
From Rangoon to Mandalay?"

On the road to Mandalay"

The mile-long square fort containing the former Royal Palace is still there, and nearby another smaller teak palace still stands with intricate wooden relief carvings throughout the whole structure. The history of the Burmese Kingdom of Ava and its last monarch, King Thebaw, is a fascinating tale.

The penultimate stop, Inle Lake, vaunted for an ecological environment, and like Bagan, a transcendent experience for an Asiaphile a point not fully explored than Laguna de Bay.

Five days on a two-story, air-conditioned sightseeing boat to witness its people in mind and passage. He wandered through winding canals and floating markets, past rare personal utopias.

It was on a longboat headed back to the resort our last afternoon when I turned [illegible] with awe at the scene around me. The distant mountains emerge, a dark hazy gaze throughout the day, was now a dusky purple.

In the distance, men in their boats were heading their nets up. A flock of seagulls several feet above trailed our boat, skirting through the glass lake. It was a sight to behold, yet subsumed, as words only for that moment.

The return to Rangoon would not be a letdown. When we arrived the week before, the Shwedagon Temple was in its first step. It dominates the city landscape in size and grandeur. There were thousands of people, families mostly, kneeling in front of altars and images relevant to their prevailing needs in the day of the week they were born.

Many disrupt the flow of people, some with incense, positively still, beside in prayer, eyes closed in a devotion I envied. Incense from quintuals. The four of candles and incense permeated the air. Up close, the main temple, gilded and bedecked in floodlights, was a wondrous picture.

One last night in the city was spent on second at the famed Strand Hotel, the grand lady of colonial hotels in the region. It has been impeccably preserved, and the suite with its vast dressing room was enormous and tastefully appointed. It was like a time machine to a striking man of the city seems the equivalence of walking our Escolta or Ermita. A few stellar buildings have been recognized as worth preserving, such as the City Hall, an obvious delight to gaze at.

Our last evening, a cousin of Wynn Wynn treated us to a tour of the city in a restored 1930s bus all done inside in teak paneling. We popped champagne at the edge of a pub, the Shwedagon Temple, in all its radiant beauty a distance away.

It makes by their very nature wonder the souls to see another way of life address its beauty, and gain insights in the process. Myanmar's problems are no secret, but my embellishment with the country includes the fervent hope that its people and government will find peaceful ways for its betterment.

John L. Silva is a writer who has [illegible] travel in and outside the country. A trip to Burma replicating the above itinerary is planned for the end of March and November. For more information, please visit AWOW! 720-1620 or jal.ca@sbcglobal.net.

SWATCH Lady Collection in yellow, with white Arabic numerals, yellow silicone strap that wraps twice around the wrist.

VALDES with SPI's Hillie Dizon (left) and Cheryll Virgie Ramos

MODELS...employers actually...in Valdes' vintage gowns at curtain call with Valdes herself.

Tessa's Closet goes to MOA

From page F1

fashion show director Bobbie Cayetano from among Manila's young employees. Each wears a colorful Swatch taken from the new The Lady Collection.

The Swatch pieces were with the ensembles designed by Manila's top fashion designers through the years, among them Rajo Laurel, the late Joe Salazar, Dennis Lustico, Jojo Llorca.

Swatch's The Lady Collection is a colorful and creative, ever-enhancing collection of new Swatch watches and bijoux. The 2010 watches are fashionable plastic Lady models with long, slim silicone straps that wrap twice around the wrist. The plastic cases, bezels and silicone straps offer cool new colors to suit the latest fashion trends...light blue, purple, peach, light pink, neon, yellow, green, pale crimson, beige and white.

The Lady Collection includes a complementary family of Swatch Bijoux called Colour Codes. This trendy new family of bijoux extends the season's color spectrum with striking, slim leather bracelets, each in a different hue...white, black, light blue, dark blue, red, yellow, purple, green, orange and pink. In addition, each bracelet comes with 10 colored leather loops, to the same 10 colors as the bracelets.

Swatch is available at Swatch Stores in SM Megamall, Glorietta 4, Greenbelt 5 and Trinoma; Swatch Kiosks in SM Mall of Asia, SM City North EDSA, SM City Davao, Ellacorta 3, Greenhills 9 Mall, Shangri-la Plaza, Robinsons Place Ermita, Ilta Lanta East Grand Mall, Festival Mall and Ayala Center, Cebu.

SWATCH BIJOUX: Skinny leather bracelet comes in 10 colors—white, black, light blue, dark blue, red, yellow, purple, green, orange and pink.

PAGIN SWATCH Lady Collection

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SILDES in a Rajo Laurel gown she wore to the 20-16 Teller ball, made of foam sprayed painted to resemble tool.

No, I didn't Photoshop Sharon

From page F1

it simple. Photoshop procedure may take 10 minutes of computer time, but a model take only one seconds if done correctly with a camera.

I am not just defending my craft, or putting down people who love Photoshop. I am just worried that the digital world has convinced most people that Photoshop is the end-all and be-all of things.

This generation has been given the chance to do things other generations couldn't, thanks to digital technology. Let us not be slaves to this technology; technology should be our slave.

Sharon is a beautiful person, inside and out. I have worked with her through the years, and we have developed a friendship that I am proud of. I know she is the type you would want to keep as friend.

My heart bleeds as I read Sharon's visit in Cebu over. It is unfair to judge someone who has entertained us for years, ever since she was a teenager. She practically grew up her childhood just to give us hours, so, years of entertainment.

So, next time we feel like making a sensational allegation, exercise caution. Sometimes what we say about someone else reflects more on our own demons than those of the person we are trying to judge.

The author has been one of Manila's favorite photographers for more than a decade now—who's done countless images for both advertising campaigns and magazines and other print media.

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This Electric Steam Sterilizer is fast, effective and easy to use.

ENTERTAINMENT

Edna Enerio-G. Velarde

QUESTIONS for "Chanda" lead star Jodi Sta. Maria, recent Inquirer visitor: 1) Do many people ask about your father-in-law (Sen. Sandiko Lacson)? Response: A shrug and a sigh. 2) What do you say? Response: Another shrug, eyes glazing over. 3) Sis, really? Words...at last: "I don't talk about it."

Rethinking Oscar picks

LOS ANGELES — Having marched through Hollywood's major guild awards with fairly ordinary, stupid-like "The King's Speech" has in past weeks been a front-runner to sweep through the Oscars. But that may be about to change.

With only about 10 days to go, Oscar pundits are rethinking their picks. And as much as co-hosts James Franco and Anne Hathaway are expected to bring a youthful glow to the ceremony show, the races for Best Actor and Actress could offer some surprises, experts say.

The Academy Awards, where A-list movie stars like Nicole Kidman and Javier Bardem will turn out in their finest gowns, jewelry and tuxedos, unveils its red-carpet on Feb. 27. Already Hollywood is gearing up with a week of celebrations leading up to its biggest night of the year.

Tension building

But the really big show will be Sunday's awards, where the tension is building not so much over whether "King's Speech" will win Best Film, as reported. Rather, the question is: Can it sweep through the other top categories?

"It looks like a 'King's Speech' coronation. The question is how wide will its influence spread," said veteran Oscar watcher Tom O'Neil of awards website goldderby.com and theenvelope.com.

"The King's Speech," which tells how British King George VI overcame his stammer to rally his countrymen on the eve of World War II, is widely expected to take Best Film after picking

RETHINKING 31

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DUMAGUETE
BACOLOD
ILOILO
CEBU
BACOLOD GRAND
PRINCESS KA LABAN
Vina Morales

Indie films find audiences

By Raquel San Diego Jr.

FESTIVALS featuring independent films are being organized all over the country.

The Film Development Council of the Philippines (FDCP) started the ball rolling this year with the first Sinag Festival in Iloilo City (Jan. 19-23). This was followed by the Silad Film Festival in Naga (Jan. 21-Feb. 2), Bandiyawan Visayan Film Festival (Feb. 1-5) in Bacolod, and Cinema Bridges in Davao City (Feb. 9-12).

Though these regional events, indie films and filmmakers were able to reach base with local viewers.

Now on its second year, the Silad fest was supported by the FDCP and the city government, and was initiated by local schools Ateneo de Naga University (Department of Media Studies headed by Dr. Elgine Abad), Bicol University Mobile College and Ateneo University among others. There

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around the country

College, University of Negros Occidental Recoletos, Colegio de San Agustin in Iloilo.

Bandilyowod originally aimed to highlight the works of filmmakers from Negros Occidental and Negros Oriental. On its third year, however, Bandilyowod expanded to include films from other Visayan provinces like the popular Antamok.

From July 22 to 31, the FDCP will hold the first Sinag Pelikula Iloilo Tour in Miagao, in Zamboanga City at the Mindpro Citimall, in June, the fest will be held in Mactan City Lumen del Sol.

E-mail: bayanihan@yahoo.com

Edit Pamela "Last Supper No. 3" (above); Edit Antonio and and Mercedes Cabral in "Deparol"

MOVIE TIME

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4. THE MECHANIC
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SHOW TIME

THE MAINE

NEVER Shout Never

By Alige Policarpio
Contributor

THE MAINE, Never Shout Never and We The Kings are three foreign bands which joined the rowdy swing of concerts in Manila this month. Spon-sored by Apulia Mallo, the groups played in a series of free gigs that started on Feb. 17 and ends today, 6 p.m. at Alabang Town Center.

Like Colbie Caillat, Lily Allen, Nicki Minaj and Jesse Rutherford, the closer pop acts jump-started their careers through the social networking site MySpace.

Hosting a band press con at Shield Sock Café blasted on Feb. 16, The Maine and Never Shout Never talked about their music and how they got started.

The Maine, a quintet of 20-some-thing Americans, is composed of John O'Callaghan (vocals), Garrett Nickelsen (bassist), Pat Kirch (drums), Kennedy Brock (guitar and vocals), and Jared Monaco (guitar).

The band, which got its name from the song "Coast of Maine" by Jenny, first performed before an audience of "about 600" fans—gathered through MySpace and word of mouth.

In 2008 it released its debut album "Can't Stop, Won't Stop," before releasing with Good Charlotte, and Boys Like Girls.

"Some of us were still in high school and their parents won't let them go on the road until summer time. So we had to figure out how to connect with people. We took advantage of MySpace," said O'Callaghan.

Last year, it released its second album, "Black and White." Describing the band as "punk-rock, goth, emo-popish," O'Callaghan said that the new album is a departure from the fun, danceable sense of its predecessor. People can expect "heavier organ music" and "more rock and roll" this time around, he added.

Justin Bieber comparisons

When Never Shout Never front man Chris Drew burst into the scene almost three years ago, people compared him to teen pop superstar Justin Bieber for his moppy hair, high-pitched vocals, and legion of prepubescent fangirls.

Now 21, Drew sports an edgier hairstyle and denser tattoos on both arms. The voice however, sounds pretty much the same.

Along with band mates, Caleb Grennon (lead guitar), Nathan Ellison (drums), Taylor Mueller (bass), Dustin Gehrung (keyboards, violin), and Hayden Kaiser (percussion, tambourine, djembe, xylophone), Drew makes short, catchy, feel-good songs with tongue-in-cheek lyrics.

Drew started making music at 16, while experiencing one of his life's toughest moments. "I dropped out from high school. I didn't know what to do with my life. I left the house. I lived in my car. MySpace was all I did all day. I mainly recorded songs and put them up.... Then people just started checking them out," he recalled.

Since 2008, Never Shout Never has sold 50,000 self-released EPs, while its MySpace page has over 55 million song plays. Early in 2010, the band released its debut mini-album "What is Love," followed by its first full-length record, "Harmony," the same year.

Asked about the best and worst thing about being a MySpace sensation, the 5ft6in, dry-humored Drew said, "What's great is that we're given the chance to be heard. The downside is that half of these people probably didn't like what they heard."

Rethinking Oscar picks

From page G1

up similar awards from Hollywood guilds representing actors, directors, writers and producers.

It faces its toughest competition from Facebook film "The Social Network," which won top honors among many critics groups but has fallen off the pace in recent weeks.

Other top nominees include ballet drama "Black Swan," "The Fighter," "True Grit" and "The Kids Are All Right."

The battle for Best Director is between "King's Speech" maker Tom Hooper and "Social Network" helmsman David Fincher.

Hooper claimed top honors from Hollywood's directors, but Fincher took home the British film academy's honor on Hooper's home turf.

Tight race for Best Actress

In the first actor race, Colin Firth is widely picked to win for his performance as King George VI, but among actresses, the competition is too close to call between "Black Swan" actress Natalie Portman and Annette Bening in "The Kids Are All Right."

Portman earned a strong personal sympathy vote for overcoming an early career backlash to win Hollywood, and has claimed many early awards, including Golden Globe and Screen Actors Guild awards.

But Bening, who portrays a lesbian mother in "Kids," is a three-time loser at the Oscars, and Bore is a feeling that it is her time to win. Moreover, she is a member of the Academy's Board of Governors and is well-liked in the group.

NATALIE PORTMAN, "Black Swan"

HELENA Bonham Carter, "The Speech"

Bue has been doing a lot of campaigning, and she has a lot of support," said Steve Hazlewood, Oscar watcher for Deadline Hollywood. "That (race) is tipping a slight upset."

Expected to win

Among Supporting Actor and Actress, Oscarlist. Bale playing a drug addict/boxer as in "The Fighter" and Melissa Leo as his mother, are widely

ANNETTE Bening, "The Kids Are Alright"

picked to win.

But the experts said that if "King's Speech" sweeps through early categories like Costume Design, it will have momentum.

Bale might see its supporting star Geoffrey Rush win. Likewise, Helena Bonham Carter in "King's Speech" or 14 year-old Hailee Steinfeld in "True Grit" could claim Best Supporting honors.

Unusual step

Oscar organizers took the highly unusual step of hiring nine comedians—Fenton, 52, and Rothaway, 29—as the co-hosts for this year's telecast, which normally is the second most watched TV show in the United States.

Typically the Academy has hired women such as Jon Stewart or Ellen DeGeneres to host the show. Fenton and Rothaway are dramatic actors. Their choice is widely viewed as a move by the Academy to lure younger audiences.

Fenton, Rothaway and the show's producers have been quiet about what they have in store on Oscar night, but in interviews, the hosts school the "You're Invited" theme of this year's show: saying it was inclusive for movie audiences of all types and ages.

Rothaway said Franco would be the perfect host because he'll be just about recovering to get the night performances.

"When it comes to taking risks, especially in comedy and all kinds of performances, I think James is the most brave actor of my generation," Rothaway said. "I don't think he has any kind of ego about that stuff."

Last year's telecast attracted 41 million US viewers—the most-watched Oscars in five years—and organizers hope to maintain that momentum. In fact, the recent Grammy (music) and Golden Globe (film and TV) awards are increased viewers.

HAILEE Steinfeld, "True Grit"

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EASTWOOD CINEMAS

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2 UNKNOWN :: PG13 — 1:50, 4:40, 7:40, 10:10
3 THE MECHANIC :: R18 — 12:00, 2:10, 4:20, 6:30, 8:40, 10:50
4 UNKNOWN 3D :: PG13 — 12:50, 3:10, 5:30, 7:50, 10:10
5 JUST GO WITH IT :: PG13 — 11:00, 1:20, 3:40, 6:00, 8:20, 10:40
6 3D DIGITAL CINEMA
7 DIGITAL CINEMA

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THE COEN BROTHERS
IT REMINDS US OF THE GLORY
A COEN BROTHERS FILM
TRUE GRIT
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Narito na ang Bagong Pilipino. 2.25.11

ENTERTAINMENT

Former Sweet Starlet returns after secret 9-month vacation

By the Entertainment Staff

HERE was one of the funniest and most innocent-looking faces in Ghost Town. Where her mannerage for the cocks, Sweet Starlet retained to the last but her career went nowhere. What's a girl to do?

He ended up in the arms of Ninoy Policarpio. After nine months of playing hide-and-seek with the public, she emerged with a new bundle of joy.

Also, the culprit's mother is old enough to be her dad. Worse, SP is also married and has other girlfriends on the side.

Jobless hunks

Blame the faltering economy. Jobless Hunks, products of a reality show, have repeatedly teamed in the oldest profession.

They are said to be available for "dates" with guys and mistress willing to pay with P50,000.

Another Mexico bird charges P50,000. He apparently married nursing tricks to subsidize his common urge to be vacuous.

Handsome Cutie's (from TV5's cul station) tag prize hasn't been all, at P50,000 per night. Infra-money? Is he used to cheaper currency?

Bass' wrath

Big Bass wouldn't hide it. Yes, Bass, he expressed disdain for the weather's latest acquisition, feeling bias from rival station.

SP just couldn't fathom why his underlings signed up 5S, who has a nasty rep. To spite rival station?

Soon enough, SP was proven correct: 5S projects scrambled big time. SP used to resting under his breath, "I told you so."

Last fling

Character thrives, segue used from Hayley Dubby is addicted to love—particularly, to Cute reverend Hank.

Q1 is already committed to Younger Girl and yet CA insisted on one last fling before they called it quits. One for the road. Inevitable. Or asked for an encore pa?

Of course, Q1 was only too happy to oblige.

De facto first lady

They used to hide it before, but Monica Starlet is now very much

RUSHES

open about her "special relationship" with Montreal Politician.

Mh is now acting as the city's de facto first lady. Any holidays who wants to break Mh's cardiac restraint, need only go through Mh, equipped a mobs.

Accidental mentor

Dainon Dublin admits she was daunted by the dual roles she took on recently—producer to lifetime partner Dolphy's MMFF project, "Father Jojomon" and mentor to aspiring singers on pal Sharon Cuneta's ABS-CBN show "Star Watch."

Zaenon has produced her own concerts in the past, but the stint "Jojomon" was her longest ever. "I'm an accidental producer. I just wanted to fulfill Dolphy's dream of playing a priest on screen."

She was a hands-on producer, just the same, as she was hands-on when she served as mentor on "Star Watch" (which will have to finish today). She didn't play it coy and was blunt in dishing out comments.

She explains, "You have to be honest to the newcomers. You have to point out their mistakes."

Zaenon relates that Sharon is doing everything she learns with the contenders. The final five are: Akiko Bolton of Cebu, Angeline Quinto, Manila; K-La Rivera, Calgary, Canada; Kitrad Yabbies, Davao, and Monica Sweng, Leyte.

"Sharon is in top form as a mentor," Zaenon says. "She's very generous. The contestants are lucky to have her share her trade secrets."

Probation for Mars

LAS VEGAS—Gaming Mania entice Senator Mars had two firsts this week. One was winning a Grammy; the other came Wednesday when the 23-year-old singer-songwriter pleaded guilty to cocaine possession.

Mars will avoid prison and will have no restriction on his record if he stays out of trouble for a year and meets other conditions of his plea deal.

Clark County District Judge Jessie Walsh gave Mars, whose real name is Peter Gene Hernandez, probation, a $2,000 fine, 200 hours of community service in a nonprofit organization and eight hours with a drug counselor in Los Angeles. AP

Top of the Tabloids

The top shout biz news in the locales tabloid Bandera (and why we are amused if we are amused):

★Model pinagseselosan si Bea, Brace during catwalk. (Ayan na.)

★Sa highway pup-umot si Dolphy KC, Marian dynamic talaga ang look ha! (KC to what ... (5?)

★Bitter daw ito: Mga para kay Kylie. (At "Marlene"?)

★Kahit dalhado ang matamaan, hanic Engel ako pag pinag-usapan ako! (Who could be Ingrid.)

★Ayaw pa pigil ma-in love kay Aaron Aboul ako magpapamatay (Oh! Oh! can't imagine that she'll mind.)

★Mainitinong gloves si Bella Hermosa! ma. (Dead?)

★Si Aj, ginagamit lang ng bagong dyowa? (Ger-matters.)

★Nagmahhong well flower sa "Willing Willie." Dahan salbig si Isagat. (Aren't we.)

★Sikat ayaw bigyan ng matrimonial ng bag si Mega. (She can buy them.)

★Mala raw dalat magbonay-mama, Ayaw ayaw pang bakitan si Priscilla Meirelles. (Language please!!!)

★Dahilll ang love team nina Kiko, Allen, Bea, Bela ungat na sa "Machete" (At we're glad!!!)

★Bhayside na raw kaung jumohang, Arnel Pineda kwentos ang resses. (Mh dosil. Isellaw this.)

★Chance, dedma sa mga chismis. (Hay Missing Dipnah lang siya kuno.)

Ultimate fighter

ACTRESS Iwa Moto admits it was her dream to be the first female EPC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) fighter in the country.

Iwa has been into mixed martial arts for almost three years now. The US-based UFC is here to the top-ranking fighters in the world and produces numerous events worldwide.

"I wanted to be the first Pinay to make it to the UFC, but the idea didn't sit well with my boyfriend, Mikael Ahlin, a top fighter of Submission Sport Philippines is the lightweight category, encouraged her to try the contact sport. "I lost a lot of weight because of it," said Iwa, Aileen Quintanilla-Sarmiento in real life.

Iwa does strong boxing and grappling, or hand-to-hand combat similar to wrestling. "I feel safe; I can defend myself," she said, adding, "And nine of the few times I get to bully Hickey is when we are training."

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'Unang Hirit' turns 11; Barang

BARANGAY LS 97.1, the flagship FM station of GMA Network, launches its new campaign — "Tagilagan Tayo" — and welcomes all pop today on the occasion show "Unang Pilipinas."

The television commercial features Raymond-John Barque, Sam Pinto, Dawn Zulueta and Pokwang. They are joined by the Elite of Barangay LS — Jeffrey Tam, Papa Dudut, Jr., Papa Dudut, the Jinx, Papa Dudut, Mama Belle, Papa Bakit, Papa Ellen, Papa Bow, Papa Dan, Mama Cyrus Chikatita.

According to program director Glenn Alvarez, Barangay LS has adapted the "crazy fun" sound to the station through its campaign "Talk To Text" and "Wazzup Barkadas," among others.

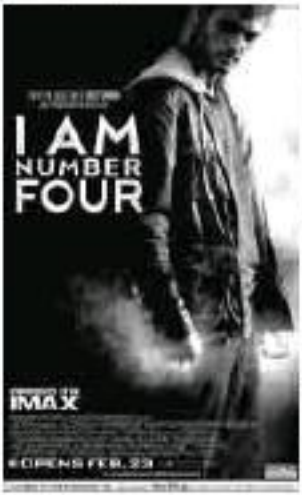
"With 'Tagilagan Tay,' we aim to bring back the fun on the angle of FM programming, which is music. We need to balance it out with humor, the element of comedy with programming with a pleasant and highly music-driven radio format," Alvarez says.

11th year

"Unang Hirit" celebrates its 11th anniversary celebration summer with more contests for viewer participation.

Arnold Clavio, Vicky Morales, Suzi Entrata-Abrera, Lyn Ching Pascual, Pia Arcangel, Connie Sison, Love Añover, Susan Enriquez, Dave Arellano, Mariam Ocubillo, Lhen Ventura, Jonicer Ch and Ron Ann" are joined by explore Unang Hirit program producer Wanda Marasigan, Jeanne Cuddy Concepcion, image consultant Chris Lim and weatherman Dio Ocola.

gay LS 97.1 launches new catchphrase



There's a Gwen Tennyson in this Pinay—and she shines

CARTOON NETWORK'S "Is There a Gwen in You?," a search for Southeast Asian girls who embody the best characteristics of the evil-hunting supergirl Gwen Tennyson from "Ben 10," found a winner in 9-year-old Gwenevere Lopez. Also known as Gwen, the mixed-race girl with her confidence and dynamism, and was awarded the title Pinay Gwen.

The Philippines topped the number of entries from its enthusiastic Asian countries, with more than 3,500 young Filipinas logging on to the dedicated microsite. They all took an interactive quiz which tested her the positive characteristics displayed by Gwen Tennyson. A panel of Cartoon Network experts selected the Pinay girl who resembled Gwen most.

Gwenevere was awarded Gwen-branded apparel, bags and accessories, a Nintendo DS Lite with new games, Cartoon Network goodies and the experience of a Gwen-themed photo-shoot. She will join other winners from across Southeast Asia to represent Gwen in empowering girls to have greater self-esteem, confidence and free self-defining action lifestyle.

Johnny Depp on critics thrashing 'The Tourist'

JOHNNY Depp

LOS ANGELES—Asked in a recent interview about critics thrashing "The Tourist," his recent film with Angelina Jolie, Johnny Depp answered: "How go into a film and do the best work you can do. The second they roll you, 'It's a wrap, it's really no longer any of your business. I always walk away thank everyone and it's done."

The 47-year-old actor couldn't disagree more that the comedy romance in the film has been that unpleasant. "Florian (Donnell von Donnersmarck) is a terrific filmmaker. Angie is obviously a great talent ... The cinematography is great," he pointed out.

"Maybe I'm the one who screwed it up," he added. "but I don't know because I haven't seen the film."

Johnny also discussed another film he has finished shooting, "The Rum Diary," an adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's first novel. It was shot in 2009 but its release date has been in limbo. "We're hoping to bring the movie out in the fall this year," Johnny said. "It's one of those films you want to be really right on the money when to put it out."

'Slow down, kid'

On the question of how he approaches his movie roles—reputedly when they are as disparate as his Captain Jack character in the "Pirates" blockbusters and Ed Scrim, a doppelganger for the late Thompson, credited as the actor's gonzo journalist—Johnny said, "An actor's main responsibility is to never bore the audience, to really try to give them something they don't expect from you."

He recounted what Marlon Brando told him a few years ago. "He asked me how many films I did a year at that time. I think I said, 'Maybe two or three.' Then Marlon said, 'Oh, you have to slow down, kid, because we only have so many faces in our pocket.' I thought it was a helluva thing to say. So yes, each time, there's pressure for me to do something that hopefully could resonate."

In 1997, when Johnny had not yet landed his "Pirates" franchise, he told Vanity Fair: "I'm not a 'Sexiest Man' guy. I mean, I would be nice to be. I mean, it would be nice to get a couple of money so you can throw it at your friends and friends."

When reminded about this quote and asked what money means in his life now, he replied: "Money has given me freedom in the dollar sense that everybody's taken care of...kids, family and extended fam. It. I have certain things that can be construed as extravagance in one's life. To have a bender in the touch of France ... but it's actually the fun house that I've ever had (that I could) call home. It's a place where I know that. In 58 years, my kids are going to have their kids there."

Anonymity, simplicity

As for his house in the Bahamas, Johnny explained: "Things like an island ... essentially, it took a great film for me to be able to address my dream and buy an island. Basically, what the island represents is simplicity. Unfortunately, when you're wandering around Hollywood or New York or various places, anonymity is gone. So you search for those places where you can get anonymity and simplicity. That's pretty much what I've done with money." Laughing, he added, "That's the only time I use the dough anyway."

Also reminded about "Rango," the new animated comedy-adventure about he voices the title character, a pet lizard, Johnny said: "Gore Verbinski, who also helmed the 'Pirates' trilogy, "Rango" features the voices of Isla Fisher, Abigail Breslin, Alfred Molina and others in the story about a chameleon who dreams of being a hero in a Western town.

"Rango's now one of those things that Gore came to me from out of nowhere," Johnny explained. "It was sometime around the end of 'Pirates 3.' He said, 'I've got this idea. It sounded as strange because the only element that existed in that line was his idea of a lizard who was an actor, normal, spiritual aspect. I only knew that it's going to take place in the Wild West ... It made so little sense than that I thought, I wanna see this. I told him, 'Just say when you want me to do it. And that's what we did."

When the subject of his daughter, Lily-Rose, came up, Johnny narrated: "We were doing a press conference the other day and Jessie Bieber popped in just to say hi," apparently. Jessica's big fan of Johnny. "When I told Lily Rose about it, she turned to me in the most matter-of-fact kind of way, 'Laughing, Johnny said, "That's upsetting. No, she's a very sharp, sensitive kid who's starting to write her poetry that I assume will eventually turn into songs. She has the voice of her Mama."

E-mail the columnist at evapada_1688@yahoo.com

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